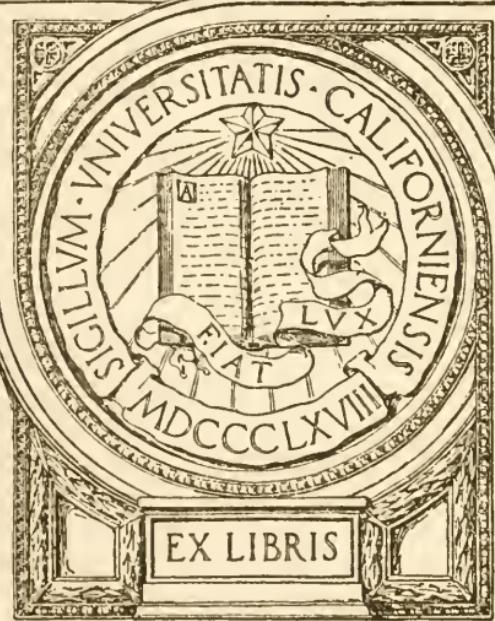


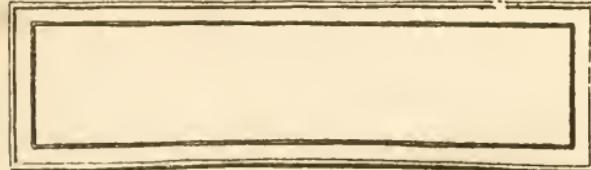
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JOSHUA MARVEL.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF 'GRIF.'

From B. L. Farjeon
June Marvel
Adult

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1871.

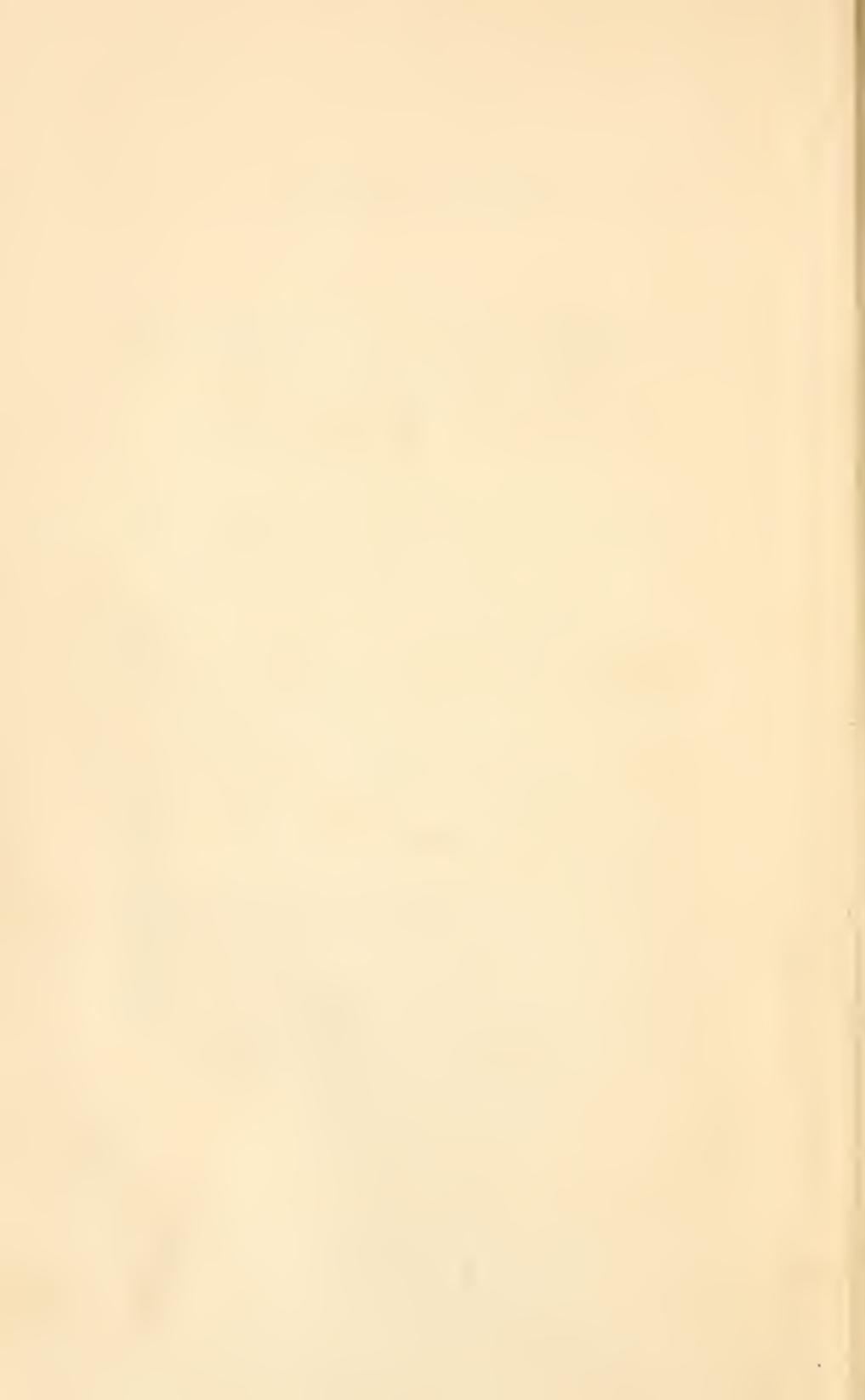
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JOSHUA MARVEL.



CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING CERTAIN FAMILY CONVERSATIONS AND THEIR
RESULT.

In the parish of Stepney, in the county of Middlesex, there lived, amidst the hundreds of thousands of human bees who throng that overcrowded locality, a family composed of four persons—mother, father, and two children, boy and girl—who owned the surprising name of Marvel. They had lived in their hive for goodness knows how many years. The father's father had lived there and died there; the father had been married from there; and the children had been born there. The bees in the locality, who elbowed each other and trod upon each other's toes, were poor and

common bees, and did not make much honey. Some of them made just enough to live upon ; and a good many of them, now and then, ran a little short. The consequence was, that they could not store any honey for a rainy day, and were compelled to labour and toil right through the year, in cold weather and in warm weather, in sunshine and in rain. In which respect they were worse off than other bees we know of, that work in the summer and make themselves cosy in the winter.

The bees in the neighbourhood being common and poor, it was natural that the neighbourhood itself should partake of the character of its inhabitants. But, common and poor as it was, it was not too common nor too poor for love to dwell in it. Love did reside there ; not only in the hive of the Marvels, but in hundreds of other hives, tenanted by the humblest of humble bees.

George Marvel had married for love ; and, lest the reader should suppose that the contract was one-sided, it may be as well to mention that George Marvel's wife had also married for love. They fell in love in the usual way, and they married in the usual way ; and, happy and satis-

fied with each other, they did not mar their enjoyment of the then present by thinking of the sharp stones which, from the very circumstances of their position, were pretty sure to dot the road of their future lives. There are many such simple couples in the world who believe that the future is carpeted with velvet grass, with the sun always shining upon it, and who find themselves all too soon stumbling over a dark and rocky thoroughfare.

It was not long before the Marvels came to the end of *their* little bit of carpet sunshine ; yet, when they got upon the sharp stones, they contrived by industry and management to keep their feet. George Marvel was a wood-turner by trade, and earned on an average about thirty-two shillings a week. What with a little new furniture now and then, and a little harmless enjoyment now and then, and a few articles of necessary clothing now and then, and the usual breakfasts, dinners, and teas, with a little bit of supper now and then, the thirty-two shillings a week were pretty well and pretty fully employed. So well and so fully were those weekly shillings employed, that it was often a very puzzling matter to solve that problem which millions of human atoms are studying at

this present moment, and which consists in endeavouring to make both ends meet. That they did contrive, however, to make both ends meet (not, of course, without the tugging and stretching always employed in the process), was satisfactorily demonstrated by the fact that the family were respected and esteemed by their neighbours, and that they owed no man a shilling. Not even the baker; for they sent for their loaves, and paid for them across the counter. By that they almost always received an extra piece to make up weight; and such extra pieces are of importance in a family. Not even the butcher; for Mrs. Marvel did her own marketing, and found it far cheaper to select her own joints, which you may be sure never had too much bone in them. Not even the eat's-meat man; for the farthing a day laid out with that tradesman was faithfully paid in presence of the carroty-haired cat (who ever heard of a cat with auburn hair?), who sat the while with eager appetite, looking with hungry eyes at the skewer upon which hung her modicum of the flesh of horse.

Mrs. Marvel was a pale but not sad woman, who had no ambition in life worthy of being called one save the ambition of making both ends meet,

and of being able, although Stepney was not liable to floods, to keep the heads of her family above water. But, because Mrs. Marvel had no ambition, that was no reason why Mr. Marvel should not have any. Not that he could have defined precisely what it was if he had been asked; but that the constant difficulties which cropped up in the constant attempt to solve the problem (which has something perpetual in its nature) of making both ends meet, made him fretful. This fretfulness had found vent in speech day after day for many years; so that Joshua Marvel, the wood-turner's heir, had from his infancy upwards been in the habit of hearing what a miserable thing it was to be poor, and what a miserable thing it was to be cooped up, as George Marvel expressed it, and what a miserable thing it was to live until one's hair turned gray without ever having had a start in the world. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Joshua Marvel had gathered slowly in his mind the determination not to be a wood-turner all his life, but to start in the world for himself, and try to be something better; never for one moment thinking that there was the most remote possibility of his ever being anything worse. When, in the

course of certain family discussions and conversations, this determination became known, it did not receive discouragement from the head of the family, although the tender-hearted mother cried by the hour together, and could not for the life of her see why Joshua should not be satisfied to do as his father had done before him.

‘And what is that, mother?’ Mr. Marvel would ask. ‘What have I done before him? I’ve been wood-turning all my life before him—that’s what I’ve been doing; and I shall go on wood-turning, I suppose, till my dying day, when I can’t wood-turn any more. Why, it might be yesterday that I started as a boy to learn wood-turning. The first day I used the lathe I dreamt that I had cut my thumb off; and I woke up with a curious sensation in my jaw which has haunted me ever since like a ghost. That was before I knew you, mother. And now it is to-day, and I’m wood-turning still; and——How many white hairs did you pull out of my head last night, Sarah?’

‘Fourteen,’ replied Sarah; ‘and you owe me a farthing.’

‘Fourteen,’ said Mr. Marvel, quietly repudiating the liability, which arose from an existing

arrangement that Sarah should have a farthing for every dozen white hairs she pulled out of his head; ‘and next week it will be forty, perhaps; and the week after four hundred.’

‘White hairs will come, father,’ said Mrs. Marvel; ‘we must all get ‘em when we’re old enough.’

‘I’m not old enough,’ grumbled Mr. Marvel.

‘And I don’t see, father,’ continued Mrs. Marvel, ‘what the fourteen white hairs Sarah pulled out of your head has to do with Joshua.’

‘Of course *you* don’t see, mother,’ said Mr. Marvel, who had a contempt for a woman’s argument; ‘*you’re* not supposed to see,’ being a woman; but I *do* see; and what I say is, wood-turning brings on white hairs quicker than anything else.’

‘Grandfather was a wood-turner,’ remarked Mrs. Marvel, ‘and he didn’t have white hairs until he was quite old.’

‘Well, he was lucky — that’s all I can say; but, for all that, Josh isn’t going to be a wood-turner, unless he’s set his mind upon it.’

‘I won’t be a wood-turner, father,’ said Joshua.

‘All right, Josh,’ said Mr. Marvel; ‘you sha’n’t.’

From this it will be seen that the voice maternal was weak and impotent when opposed to the voice paternal. But Mrs. Marvel, although by no means a strong-minded woman, had a will of her own, and a quiet unobtrusive way of working which often achieved a victory without inflicting humiliation. She did not like the idea of her boy leading an idle life; she had an intuitive conviction that Joshua would come to no good if he had nothing to do. She argued the matter with her good man, and never introduced the subject at an improper time. The consequence was, that her first moves were crowned with success.

‘If Joshua won’t be a wood-turner, father—’ she said.

‘Which he won’t,’ asserted her husband.

‘Which he won’t, as you say,’ Mrs. Marvel replied, like a sensible woman. ‘If he won’t be a wood-turner, he must be something. Now he must be something, father—mustn’t he?’

This being spoken in the form of a question, left the decision with Mr. Marvel; and he said, as if the remark originated with himself,

‘Yes; he must be something.’

And with that admission Mrs. Marvel rested

content for a little while ; but not for long. She soon returned to the attack ; and asked her husband what Joshua should be. Now this puzzled Mr. Marvel ; and he could not see any way out of the difficulty, except by remarking that the boy would make up his mind one of these fine days. But ‘these fine days’—in which people, especially boys, make up their minds—are remarkably like angels’ visits ; and the calendar of our lives often comes to an end without one of them being marked upon the record. To all outward appearance, this was likely to be the case with Joshua ; and the task of making up his mind seemed to be so tardy in its accomplishment, that George Marvel himself began to grow perplexed as to the future groove of his son and heir ; for Joshua kept himself mentally very much to himself. Vague wishes and desires he had ; but they had not yet shaped themselves in his mind—which was most likely the reason why they had not found expression.

Meanwhile Mrs. Marvel was not idle. She saw her husband’s perplexity, and rejoiced at it. Her great desire was to see Joshua settled down to a trade, whether it were wood-turning or any other. Wood-turning she would have preferred ; but, failing that, some other trade which would

fix him at home; for with that keen perception which mothers only possess with regard to their children—a perception which springs from the maternal intellect alone, and which is born of a mother's watchful anxious love—she felt that her son's desires, unknown even to himself, might possibly lead him to be a wanderer from her world, the parish of Stepney, in which she was content to live and die. In that beehive she had been born; in that beehive she had experienced calm happiness and wholesome trouble; and in that beehive she wished to close her eyes, and to see her children's faces smiling upon her, when her time came to say good-bye to the world of which she knew so little. With all a woman's cunning, with all a woman's love, she devoted herself to the task of weaning the mind of her favourite child from the restless aspirations which might drive him from her side.

'Until Joshua makes up his mind what he is going to be, father,' she said one night at candle-time, 'it's a pity he should remain idle. Idleness isn't a good thing for a boy.'

'Idleness isn't a good thing for boy or man,' said Mr. Marvel, converting his wife's remark into an original expression of opinion by the ad-

dition of the last two words. ‘But I don’t see what we are to do, mother.’

‘Suppose I get him a situation—as an errand-boy, perhaps—until he makes up his mind.’

‘I’m agreeable,’ said Mr. Marvel, ‘if Josh is.’

But Josh was not agreeable. Many a fruitless journey did Mrs. Marvel make, trudging here and trudging there; and many an application did she answer in person to written announcements in shop-windows of ‘Errand-boy wanted.’ Joshua would not accept any of the situations she obtained for him. She got him one at a watchmaker’s; no, he would not go to a watchmaker’s: at a saddler’s; no, he would not go to a saddler’s: at a bootmaker’s, at a tailor’s; no, nor that, nor that. Still she persevered, appearing to gain fresh courage from every rebuff. As for Joshua, he was beginning to grow wearied of her assiduity. He was resolved not to go to any trade, but being of a very affectionate nature he desired to please his mother, and at the same time to convince her that it was of no use for her to worry him any longer. So he set her what he considered to be an impossible task: he told her that he was determined not to go anywhere except to a printing-office. He felt assured that she would never be able to

get him within the sacred precincts of such an establishment. And even if she did, there was something more noble, something more distinguished and grander, in printing than in boot-making, or tailoring, or watchmaking, or wood-turning. There was a fascinating mystery about it; he had seen watchmakers, and tailors, and cobblers working, but he had never seen the inside of a printing-office. Neither had any of his boy-friends. He had been told, too, that there was an act of parliament which allowed printers to wear swords in the streets. That was a fine thing. How all the neighbours would stare when they saw him walking through the narrow streets of Stepney with a sword at his side! Joshua had some sense of humour; and he chuckled to himself at the impossible task he had set his mother.

He was therefore considerably astonished one day, when Mrs. Marvel told him she had obtained a situation for him as errand-boy in a newspaper-office. Did ever a woman fail, except from physical or mental prostration, in the accomplishment of a certain thing upon which she has set her mind? And if, in working for the accomplishment of the desired result, she brings to her

aid an unselfish, unwearying love, *then* did ever a woman fail? At all events Mrs. Marvel did not. After much labour, fortune befriended her; and she heard that an errand-boy was wanted at a certain printing-office where a weekly newspaper was printed. Thither she hurried, and soon found herself in a small dark office, in which the master sat.

He treated her in the most off-hand manner. Yes, he wanted an errand-boy. Was he sharp, intelligent, willing? O, her son! Very well. Let him come to-morrow. Wages, four shillings a week. Time, from eight to eight. An hour to dinner, half an hour to tea. Good-morning.

Thus the matter was settled, and Joshua engaged. Mrs. Marvel went home rejoicing.

With fear and trembling, a little pleased and a good deal dismayed, Joshua made his way the next morning to the printing-office. Groping along a dark passage he came to a door on which the word ‘Office’ was dimly discernible. The freshness of youthful paint had departed from the word; the letters were faded, and they appeared to be waiting to be quite rubbed out with a kind of jaded resignation. In response to the sharply uttered ‘Come in!’ Joshua opened the

door, and entered the room. The person he saw before him had such a dissipated appearance, that any stranger would have been warranted in coming to the conclusion that he had not been in bed for a fortnight. The room was full of papers, very dusty and very dirty; and looked as if, from the day it was built, it had not found time to wash itself. Scarcely raising his eyes from a long slip of paper, upon which he was making a number of complicated marks, the occupant of the room said,

‘It’s of no use bothering me. I sha’n’t have any copy ready for half an hour.—Hallo! Who are you?’

‘The new errand-boy, sir,’ said Joshua, humbly.

‘O, very well. Take this proof upstairs, and sweep the composing-room; then come down and clean the street-door plate. Cut along! Look sharp!’

Looking as sharp as he could, Joshua walked upstairs, and found himself in the composing-room of the establishment. A number of men and boys, decorated with aprons with large bibs, were playing a mysterious game with hundreds and thousands of small pieces of lead, which they

clicked with marvellous rapidity, but without any apparent meaning, against an instrument they held in their hands. He looked in vain for the swords which he had heard printers were allowed to wear, and he was covered with confusion at finding himself in the midst of so large an assemblage, who one and all appeared as if they were playing on a number of pianos without any tune in them. Going up to a youth whose head, covered with a profusion of red hair, looked as if it were in a blaze, Joshua asked to whom he should give the proof. ‘To Snooks,’ was the prompt reply. For which piece of information he received a slap on the side of his head from some person in authority ; who, taking the proof from Joshua, directed him to sweep up the room. While performing this task he surveyed the scene before him. There were sixteen men and four boys at work. All the men had the same dissipated look that he had observed upon the countenance of the master. Their faces, otherwise, were very clean ; but the tips of the right-hand fore-finger and thumb of each were black with dirt, caused by the types which they picked up with those extremities from the boxes before them. Not a word was spoken, except what appeared to have reference to

the business, and the conversation proceeded somewhat in this wise. One of the workmen, walking to a slab of iron placed in the middle of the room, took therefrom a sheet of manuscript, and looking at it negligently, shouted,

‘Number three !’

Another voice at the end of the room cried out,

‘Awful Collision !’

Joshua stopped in the midst of his sweeping, and waited for the shock. But as none came, he proceeded with his work, and thought that the second speaker was crazy. In the mean time the dialogue continued.

Speaker number one : ‘End a break.’

Speaker number two : ‘All right,’ with a growl.

Speaker number one : ‘What type ?’

Speaker number two, with another growl :
‘Minion !’

At the word ‘minion,’ which Joshua considered was a term expressive of anything but respect, he expected speaker number one would walk up to speaker number two, and punch his head. Instead of which the insulted individual went into his corner again, and recommenced

playing his tuneless piano in the meekest possible manner. The overseer then going to a part of the room where long rows of type were placed in detached pieces, asked,

‘ How long will this Dreadful Suicide be before it’s finished ? ’

‘ Done in five minutes, sir,’ was the reply, in a cheerful voice.

‘ Who’s on the Inquest ? ’ asked the overseer.

‘ I am, sir.’

‘ Be quick and get it finished ; you’ve been long enough over it.—Now, then, how long is this Chancery Court to remain open ? ’

‘ Close it up in two minutes, sir.’

And Joshua gazed with a kind of wonder at the individual who spoke, as if it were as easy to close the Court of Chancery as to close his hand.

It was the day on which the paper was sent to press ; the publishing hour was three o’clock in the afternoon ; and as the work was behindhand, everybody was very busy. In the centre of the room was a large iron slab, and at one time the hammering and beating on this slab were terrific. Two or three excited individuals, with mallets and iron sticks in their hands, advanced towards the

type, which was laid upon the slab, with the apparent intention of smashing it to pieces. They commenced to do this with such extraordinary earnestness, that Joshua was on the point of rushing downstairs to the master to inform him that his property was being wantonly destroyed ; but as the other workmen appeared to regard the proceeding as quite a matter of course, Joshua checked himself, and thought it would perhaps be as well for him to say nothing about it. The overseer also continued to issue his strange orders ; and during a slight cessation in the hammering, he peremptorily ordered the workmen to ‘lock up that Escaped Lunatic, and be quick about it.’ At another time he gave directions to lay the Female in Disguise on the stone (meaning the iron slab), to unlock the Old Bailey, and to correct the Chancellor’s Budget. Joshua grew perfectly bewildered. The information that there was an Escaped Lunatic in the room did not so much astonish as alarm him ; but as to the Female in Disguise he could not identify her, and he waited in amazement to see what disguise she wore and where she would be brought from ; at the same time entertaining the idea that to lay any female upon a stone was a decidedly improper

proceeding. While in this state of mental perplexity, the overseer cried out,

‘Now, then, who has the Female in Disguise in hand?’

‘I have, sir,’ a voice replied.

‘Bring it here, then,’ ordered the overseer, ‘and finish the corrections on the stone.’

‘All right, sir.’

Joshua started and looked round to catch a sight of the Female; in his agitation he stumbled against a workman who held a column of type in his arms. The type fell to the ground, and was smashed into thousands of pieces. In an instant the whole office was in confusion.

‘You’ve done it this time, youngster,’ the workman said in dismay, looking at the scattered type on the floor.

Joshua did not exactly know what it was he *had* done, but felt that it must be something very bad. He soon received practical proof of the extent of the mischief, for the master, rushing into the room, kicked him downstairs, and told him to go about his business. Which Joshua did in a state of much bewilderment.

Thus all the good intentions of Mrs. Marvel were frustrated. Joshua declared he would not

take another situation, and his father sided with him and encouraged him. It must be confessed that Mr. Marvel continued to have his perplexities about Joshua's career, but to have openly admitted them would have been handing the victory to his wife. So he kept them to himself, and thus maintained his supremacy as master of the house. Many of his neighbours were henpecked, and he used to laugh at them. It would not have done to have given them the chance to laugh at him. Therefore, as time progressed, Mrs. Marvel's protests were less and less frequently made, and Joshua's determination not to be a wood-turner gathering strength month after month, it soon came to be recognised as quite a settled thing that he was to start in life for himself, and was not to do as his father had done before him. Pending his decision, Joshua continued to lead an idle life. But he was by no means viciously inclined ; and much of his time was spent in the cultivation of two innocent amusements, both of which served him in good stead in the singular future which was in store for him. One of these amusements was a passion for music. He knew nothing of musical notation, and played entirely by ear ; yet he managed to extract sweet melody

from a second-hand accordion, of which, after long and patient saving of halfpence and pence, he had become the happy purchaser. The other of his tastes grew out of a boyish love. How he acquired it will be recounted in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW A PASSION FOR PUNCH-AND-JUDY MAY
LEAD TO DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES.

THERE are few boys in the world who are without their boy-friends whom they worship, or by whom they are worshipped, with a love far surpassing in its unselfishness the love of maturer years. The memory of times that are gone is too often blurred by waves of sorrowful circumstance. Our lives are like old pictures ; the canvas grows wrinkled, and the accumulated dust of years lies heavy upon figures that once were bright and fair. But neither dust nor wrinkles can obliterate the memory of the love we bore to the boy-friend with whom we used to wander in fields that were greener, beneath skies that were bluer, than fields and skies are now.

Cannot you and I remember the time when we used to stroll into the country with our boy-friend, and, with arms thrown lovingly around each other's neck, indulge in day-dreams not the

less sweet because they were never to be realised? And how, when we had built our castles, and were looking at them in the clouds, with our hearts filled with joyful fancies, we wandered in silence down the shady lane, sweet with the scent of the flowering May that shut us out from view on either side ; and across the field with its luxuriant grass up to our ankles, with everywhere the daisy peeping out to watch us as we passed ; and over the heath where the golden gorse was blushing with joy ; and down the narrow path to the well which shrunk from public observation at the bottom of a flight of cool stone steps, hewn out by the monks of a cloister which should have been hard by, but wasn't, having been destroyed in a bloody battle which took place once upon a time ?

Not many such experiences as these did Joshua and his boy-friend enjoy ; for our Damon's Pythias, whose proper name was Daniel Taylor, was lame, with both his legs so badly broken that, had he lived unto the age of Methuselah and been fed upon the fat of the land, those props of his body would have been as useless to him all through his long life as if they had been blades of the tenderest grass.

The Taylors had three children : Susan, Ellen,

and Daniel. Ellen and Daniel were twins, and when they were born Susan was ten years old. The worldly circumstances of the Taylors were no better than those of their neighbours ; indeed, if any thing, they were a little worse than those of many around them. The parents, therefore, could not afford to keep a nurse-girl, and it was fortunate for them that they had provided one in the person of their elder daughter, and had allowed her to grow to a suitable age before they ventured to bring other children into the world. Fortunate as it was for the parents, it was most unfortunate for Daniel ; for before he and his other half were born, Susan Taylor had contracted a passion almost insane in its intensity, to which her only brother was doomed to be a victim. That passion was a love for the British drama, as represented in *Punch and Judy*. All Susan's ambitions and yearnings were centred in the show ; and it was not to be supposed that she would allow so small a matter as twins to interfere with her absorbing passion. How the liking for *Punch and Judy* had grown with her years and strengthened with her strength, it is not necessary here to trace. The fact remains, and is sufficient for the tragedy of poor Daniel's life. Squeezed to their sister's breast,

Daniel and Ellen were condemned to take long journeys after Punch and Judy, and to be nursed at street-corners by a girl who had eyes and mind for nothing but the *dramatis personæ* of that time-honoured play. In her scrambles after the show she often wandered a long way from home, and tore her dress, and jammed her bonnet, and muddied her stockings, and knocked her boots out at the toes, and got herself generally into a disreputable condition. But in presence of the glories of Punch and Judy, which were to her ever fresh and ever bright, such discomforts sank into absolute insignificance. All paltry considerations were forgotten in the absorbing interest with which she watched the extraordinary career of the hero of the drama. She was insensible to the cuffs and remarks of the acting-manager who went round for contributions, which the on-lookers were solicited to drop into a tin plate or a greasy cap. He naturally resented Susan's presence at the exhibition, for she had never been known to contribute the smallest piece of copper towards the expenses. But neither his cuffs nor his resentful language had any effect upon Susan, who, in her utter disregard of all adverse circumstances, proved herself to be an ardent and conscientious

admirer of the British drama. As a consequence of her peregrinations, she often found herself in strange neighbourhoods, and did not know her way home. The anxiety she caused her mother, who was naturally proud of her twins, almost maddened that poor woman. She used to run about the neighbourhood of Stepney, wringing her hands and declaring that her twins were kidnapped. At first the neighbours were in the habit of sympathising with her, and of making anxious inquiries of one another concerning the children ; but when, after some months of such uneventful excitement, they found that Susan and her twins were always brought home in good condition as regarded their limbs—although in a very disgraceful condition as regarded their personal appearance : but dirt counted for nothing in such a case of excited expectation—their ardour cooled, and they withheld their sympathy from the distressed mother. Indeed, they looked upon themselves in the light of injured individuals, because something really calamitous had not happened to the children. At length Susan became such a nuisance—not only at home, but at many police-stations, where she was popularly known as ‘that dirty girl again, with the twins’—that the

mother was recommended to lock her up. Despairing of being able to cure her daughter of her Punch-and-Judy mania by any other means, the mother locked her up with her infant charges in a room on the first floor.

That was a sad thing for poor Daniel. Susan very naturally sulked at being locked up, and at being deprived of her favourite amusement. Life had no joy for her without Punch and Judy. With Punch and Judy, existence was blissful ; without Punch and Judy, existence was a blank. Regarding the twins as the cause of her imprisonment, she vented her spleen upon the unfortunate couple, and was spiteful enough to leave traces of yellow soap in their eyes when she washed them ; and when they cried because of the smart, and rubbed their eyelids with their little fists to get rid of the unwelcome particles, she smacked them on the tenderest parts of their persons, and made them cry the more. But they were not destined to endure this kind of torture for more than a couple of days.

On the third day of their imprisonment, Susan was sitting moodily on the floor, sulking as usual, and biting her lips and fretting, when suddenly the well-beloved ‘too-to-too-a-too’ of the Punch-

and-Judy showman came floating through the window. Wild with delight, she snatched up the twins, and, rushing to the window, bent her body forward, and looked out. Yes ; there it was—there was the show ! Preparations were being made for the drama ; the green curtain was down, the crowd was collecting, and the acting-manager was already taking a critical survey of the persons who loitered, and was mentally marking down those who would not be allowed to stroll or slink away without being solicited for a fee. The front of the stage was not turned towards the window out of which Susan was looking ; and she could only see part of the show. That was a terrible disappointment to her ; and her suffering was really very great when she found that the gallows upon which Punch was to be hanged was erected just in that corner of the stage of which she could not obtain a glimpse. She stamped her foot upon the floor excitedly ; and, bending her body still more forward in her eagerness, poor Daniel slipped out of her arms on to the pavement. For a moment Susan was so bewildered that she could not realise what had occurred ; but, when she heard the sharp cry of agony to which Daniel gave utterance, and when she saw the crowd of people rush-

ing with frightened faces towards the spot where the little fellow was lying, she ran into a corner of the room with the other child in her arms, and throwing her frock over her head, cowered down with her face to the wall, and began to cry. But little notice was taken of her. Daniel was picked up and carried into the house. He was not killed ; but his two legs were badly broken, and were destined never to be of any use to him. So, as he had to depend upon artificial legs for support, Daniel began to learn the use of crutches almost before he had begun to learn to toddle.

The love that existed between Joshua and Daniel sprang out of an innocent flirtation which was indulged in by Joshua Marvel and Ellen Taylor. The amatory youngsters exchanged vows when they were quite little things, and pledged themselves not to marry any one else : ‘ no, not for the wide, wide world ! ’ Innocent kisses, broken pieces of crockery with which they played at dinners and shops on back-window sills, and the building of grottoes when the oyster-season came round, were the material bonds which united the youthful loves of Joshua and Ellen.

In due time Joshua was introduced to the family ; not exactly as the accepted suitor of the

little damsel, but in a surreptitious sneaking manner, which older suitors would have considered undignified. Such a mean position did he for some time occupy in the house of his affianced, that on several occasions when Mr. Taylor came home drunk, Joshua was locked up in the coal-cellar, lest he should meet the eye of the tipsy parent, who, when he was in his cups, did not possess the most amiable disposition in the world. From that coal-cellar Joshua would emerge low-spirited and grimy, and in a despondent mood ; but sundry marks of affection from Ellen, the effects of which were afterwards visible in black patches on her nose and cheeks and cherry lips, invariably restored him to cheerfulness. Such a courtship was not dignified ; but Joshua and Ellen were perfectly satisfied ; and so was Dan, who thoroughly approved of his twin-sister's choice of a sweetheart.

As the children grew in years, the ties that united Ellen and Joshua were weakened ; while those that united the boys were strengthened, until a very perfect and unselfish love was established between them. Both the lads were in the same condition as regarded their time. Joshua had his on his hands because he had not made up his

mind what he was going to be ; and Daniel had his on his hands because he had broken his legs. Each had his particular fancy. Joshua's was music ; Dan's was birds.

Condemned to a sedentary life from the nature of his affliction, and not able to run about as other boys did—for when his sister had let him fall from her arms out of the window the breaking of his legs was not the only injury he had received—Dan turned his attention to a couple of canaries which were part of his parents' household gods. In course of time the birds grew to be very fond of him ; and he trained them to do such pretty tricks, and was himself of so gentle and amiable a disposition, that good-natured neighbours made him occasional presents of birds—such as a linnet, or a lark, or a pair of bullfinches—until he had gathered around him a small collection of feathered younglings. With these companions his life was as happy as life could be. He did not mope or fret because his legs were useless, and because he was compelled to use crutches ; on the contrary, he absolutely loved his wooden props, as if they were bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

‘ You are right not to be a wood-turner, Jo,’ said Dan, when his friend related to him the sub-

stance of the family discussions. ‘If my legs were like yours, I wouldn’t be.’

Dan called his friend ‘Jo.’ It was not quite right for Joshua, he said, but it sounded pretty. And so it did, especially from his lips.

‘I wish your legs *were* like mine, Dan,’ said Joshua.

‘It’s of no use wishing,’ replied Dan. ‘You know what mother says; it takes all sorts to make a world.’

‘Sound legs and broken legs—eh, Dan?’

‘Yes,’ answered Dan merrily; ‘and long ones and short ones, and thick ones and thin ones. Besides, if I had the strongest and biggest legs in the world, I don’t think I should be happier than I am.’

‘But wouldn’t you like to be a hero—the same as I am going to be?’ asked Joshua.

‘We can’t all be heroes. You go and fight with lions; I will stop and play with birds. I couldn’t tame lions; but I *can* tame birds.’ Which he could, and did.

Dan was fond of speaking about lions because his name was Daniel; and many and many a time had he and Joshua read the wonderful story of Daniel in the lions’ den. Joshua did not

know much of the Bible until Dan introduced it to him, and read to him in his thin sweet voice the marvellous romances in that Book of books.

‘There was a hero for you !’ exclaimed Joshua admiringly, referring to the biblical Daniel. ‘I wonder what made him so brave.’

‘Because he was doing what he knew to be right,’ replied Dan.

‘I daresay,’ was the acquiescent rejoinder.

‘And because he was not afraid to speak the truth even to Belshazzar ; and because, above all, he believed in God. So God delivered him.’

‘All because he was doing right,’ said Joshua.

‘All because he was doing right,’ repeated Dan. ‘I’m not a bit brave ; that is because I am lame, perhaps. If I was thrown into a lions’ den I should die of fear—I am sure I should ; but if I was thrown into a birds’ cage, full of strange birds, I would soon make friends with them : they would come and eat out of my hand in no time.’

Dan, indeed, was wonderfully learned about birds and their habits, and possessed a singular power over them. He could train them to anything almost. And bear this in mind : he used no cruel means in his training of them. What he

taught them he taught them by kindness ; and they were subservient to him from love, and not from fear. The nature of the affliction which condemned him to a sedentary life, sharpened and concentrated his mental faculties, and endued him with a surprising patience. If it had been otherwise, he could never have trained the birds so thoroughly. Never mind what they were—blackbirds, linnets, larks, bullfinches, canaries—they were one and all his willing slaves, and, in the course of time, performed the tasks he set them with their best ability. Give Dan any one of these birds, and in a few weeks it would hop upon his finger, dance at his whistle, come at his call, fall dead upon the table, and jump up again at a given signal as lively as a cricket. He made little carts for them to draw, little swords for them to carry, little ladders for them to climb up, little guns for them to fire off, little houses for them to go in at the doors of and come out of the chimneys of. It was a sight worth seeing to watch them go through their performances : to see the dead bird lie on its back on the table, and watch cunningly out of a corner of its left eye for the signal which allowed it to come to life again ; to see the family birds, after indulging in a little

sensible conversation on the door-step, go into the house, the door of which closed with a spring directly they got on the inside of it, and then presently to see their heads pop out of the chimneys, as if their owners were wondering what sort of weather it was ; to see the first villain of the company hop upon the cart in which the popgun was fixed, and hop upon a slip of wood which in some mysterious manner acted upon the gun, and caused it to go off—and then to see the desperado watch for dreadful consequences which never followed ; to see that cold-blooded and desperate bird jump briskly down, as if it were not disappointed, and place its neck in a ring in the shafts, and hop away to another battlefield ; to see the two military birds march up and down in front of the house, holding little wooden swords in their beaks, as who should say to an advancing foe, ‘ Approach if you dare, and meet your doom ! ’ to see the climbing-bird hop up the steps of the ladder, and then hop down again triumphantly, as if it had performed a feat of which birdkind might be proud ; and to know that the birds enjoyed the fun and delighted in it : were pleasant things to see and know, and could do no one any harm. Of course there were hitches in the performances :

occasionally the birds were dull or obstinate ; but, as a rule, they were tractable and obedient ; and if they did sometimes bungle their tricks they might well be excused, for they were but feeble creatures after all.

So Dan passed his time innocently and loved his pets, and his pets loved him. Joshua grew to love them too. He learned all their pretty little vocal tricks, and could imitate the different languages of the birds in such a wonderful manner that they would stop and listen to his warbling, and would answer it with similar joyful notes of their own. And when Dan and he were in a merry mood—which was not seldom—they and the birds would join in a concert which was almost as good, and quite as enjoyable, as the scraping of fiddles and the playing of flutes. Sometimes, in the evening, Joshua would play soft music upon his second-hand accordion ; and directly he sounded the first note the birds would hop upon the table and stand in a line, with their heads inclined on one side, listening to Joshua's simple melodies with the gravity of connoisseurs, and would not flutter a feather of their little wings for fear they should disturb the harmony of sound.

CHAPTER III.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GOLDEN CLOUD.

THERE was one canary which they had christened Golden Cloud. It was one of the two canaries that Dan had first trained ; and for this and other reasons Golden Cloud was a special favourite with the lads. Dan used to declare that Golden Cloud literally understood every word he spoke to it. And it really appeared as if Dan were right in so declaring and so believing ; it was certainly a fact that Golden Cloud was a bird of superior intelligence. The other birds were of that opinion, or they would not have accepted its leadership. When they marched, Golden Cloud was at the head of them—and very proud it appeared to be of its position ; when the performances took place, Golden Cloud was the first to commence ; if anything *very* responsible and *very* particular were to be done, Golden Cloud was intrusted with it ; and if any new bird was refractory, it devolved upon Golden Cloud to assist Dan

to bring that bird to its senses. The birds did not entertain a particle of envy towards Golden Cloud because it had attained an eminence more distinguished than their own ; and this fact was as apparent, as it must have been astonishing, to any reflective human being who enjoyed the happy privilege of being present now and then at the performances of Dan's clever troupe. Even when old age crept upon it—it was in the prime of life when Dan first took it in hand—the same respect was paid to the sagamore of the company. Its sight grew filmed, its legs grew scaly, its feathers grew ragged. What matter ? Had it not been kind and gentle to them when in its prime ? Should they not be kind and gentle to it now that Time was striking it down ? And was it not, even in its decrepitude, the wise bird of them all ?

Notwithstanding that it grew more and more shaky every hour almost, the old sense of duty was strong in the heart of Golden Cloud ; and it strove to take part in the performances to the last. Golden Cloud had evidently learnt the lesson, that to try always to do one's duty is the sweetest thing in life. In that respect it was wiser than many human beings, who should have been wiser

than it. It was a melancholy sight, yet a comical one withal, to see Golden Cloud lift a sword with its beak, and try to hold it there, and hop with it at the head of the company. It staggered here and there, and, being almost blind, sometimes hit an inoffensive bird across the beak, which caused a momentary confusion; but everything was set right as quickly as could be. The other birds bore with Golden Cloud's infirmities, and made its labours light for it. Even the tomtit—that saucy beautiful rascal, with its crown of Cambridge blue, who had been the most refractory bird that Golden Cloud ever had to deal with, who *would* turn heels over head in the midst of a serious lesson, and who *would* hop and twist about and agitate its staid companions with its restless tricks—even the tomtit, whose greatest delight was to steal things and break things, but whose spirit had been subdued and tamed by Golden Cloud's firmness, assisted the veteran in its old age, and did not make game of it.

One evening, Joshua came round to Dan's room rather later than usual, and found Dan in tears.

‘ What is the matter, Dan ? ’ asked Joshua.
Dan did not reply.

'Do your legs hurt you, Dan?' asked Joshua tenderly.

Dan formed a 'No' with his lips, but uttered no sound.

Joshua thought it best not to tease his friend with any more questions. He saw that Dan was suffering from a grief which he would presently unbosom. He took his accordion on his knee, and began to play very softly. As he played, a canary in a mourning-cloak came out of the toy-house; another canary in a mourning-cloak followed; then a bullfinch, and another bullfinch; then the tomtit and the linnets; and then the blackbirds; all in little black cloaks, which Ellen Taylor's nimble fingers had made for them that day out of a piece of the lining of an old frock. At the sight of the first canary, with its black cloak on, Joshua was filled with astonishment; but when bird after bird followed, and ranged themselves solemnly in a line before him, and when he missed the presence of one familiar friend, he solved the riddle of their strange appearance: the birds were in mourning for the death of Golden Cloud.

They seemed to know it, too; they seemed to know that they had lost a friend, and that they

were about to pay the last tribute of respect to their once guide and master. The bullfinches, their crimson breasts hidden by their cloaks, looked with their black masks of faces like negro birds in mourning ; the amiable linnets, unobtrusive and shy as they generally were, were still more quiet and sad than usual ; even the daring blackbirds were subdued—with the exception of one who, in the midst of a silent interval, struck up ‘ Polly, put the kettle on,’ in its shrill whistle, but, observing the eyes of the tomtit fixed upon it with an air of reproach, stopped in sudden remorse with the ‘ kettle’ sticking in its throat.

Dan had made a white shroud for Golden Cloud ; and it was both quaint and mournful to see it as it lay in its coffin—Dan’s money-box—surrounded by the mourners in their black cloaks. They stood quite still, with their cunning little heads all inclined one way, as if they were waiting for news concerning their dead leader from the world beyond the present.

Joshua, with a glance of sorrow at the coffin, said,

‘ Your money-box, Dan !’

‘ I wish I could have buried it in a flower-pot, Jo,’ replied Dan, suppressing a sob.

‘ Why didn’t you ?’

‘ Mother said father would be angry——’

Here the blackbird—perceiving that the tomtit was no longer observing it, and inwardly fretting that it should have been pulled up short in the midst of its favourite song ; also feeling awkward, doubtless, with a kettle in its throat—piped out, with amazing rapidity and shrillness, ‘ Polly put the kettle on ; we’ll all have tea.’

The blue feathers in the tomtit’s tail quivered with indignation, and its white-tipped wings fluttered reprovingly. Moral force was evidently quite thrown away upon such a blackbird as that ; so the tomtit bestowed upon the recreant a sharp dig with its iron beak, and the blackbird bore the punishment with meekness ; merely giving vent, in response, to a wonderful imitation of the crowing of an extremely weak cock, who led a discontented life in a neighbouring back-yard. After which it relapsed into silence.

Dan, who had stopped his speech to observe this passage between the birds, repeated,

‘ Mother said father would be angry ; he knows how many flower-pots we have. So I used my money-box.’

‘ But you would rather have a flower-pot, Dan ?’

‘I should have liked a flower-pot above all things ; it seems more natural for a bird. Something might grow out of it ; something that Golden Cloud would like to know is above it, if it was only a blade of grass.’

Joshua ran out of Dan’s room, and returned in a very few minutes with a flower-pot with mignonette growing in it. He was almost breathless with excitement.

‘It is mine, Dan,’ he said, ‘and it is yours. I bought it with my own money ; and it shall be Golden Cloud’s coffin.’

‘Kiss me, Jo,’ said Dan.

Joshua kissed him, and then carefully lifted the flower-roots from the pot, and placed Golden Cloud in the soft mould beneath. A few tears fell from Dan’s eyes into the flower-pot coffin, as he looked for the last time upon the form of his pet canary. Then Joshua replaced the flower-roots, and arranged the earth, and Golden Cloud was ready for burial.

‘Play something, Jo,’ said Dan.

Joshua took his accordion in his hands, and played a slow solemn march ; and the birds, directed by Dan, hopped gravely round the flower-pot, the tomtit keeping its eye sternly fixed upon

the rebellious blackbird, expressing in the look an unmistakable determination to put an instant stop to the slightest exhibition of indecency.

'I don't know where to bury it,' said Dan when the ceremony was completed. 'Ellen has been trying to pick out a flagstone in the yard, but she made her fingers bleed, and then couldn't move it. And if it *was* buried there, the stone would have to be trodden down, and the flowers in the coffin couldn't grow.'

'There's that little bit of garden in *our* yard,' said Joshua. 'I can bury it there, if you don't mind. I can put the flower-pot in so that the mignonette will grow out of it quite nicely. It isn't very far, Dan,' continued Joshua, divining Dan's wish that Golden Cloud should be buried near him; 'only five yards off, and it is the best place we know of.'

Dan assenting, Joshua took the flower-pot, and buried it in what he called his garden; which was an estate of such magnificent proportions that he could have covered it with his jacket. He was proud of it notwithstanding, and considered it a grand property. A boundary of oyster-shells defined the limits of the estate, and served as a warning to trespassing feet. In the centre

of this garden Golden Cloud was buried. When Joshua returned to Dan's room, the mourning-cloaks were taken off the birds—who seemed very glad to get rid of them—and they were sent to bed.

Dan was allowed to sit up an hour longer than usual that night, and he and Joshua occupied those precious minutes in confidential conversation. First they spoke of Golden Cloud, and then of Joshua's prospects.

' You haven't made up your mind yet what you are going to be, Jo,' said Dan.

' I haven't made up my mind,' replied Joshua, ' but I have an idea. I don't want you to ask me what it is. I will tell you soon—in a few weeks perhaps.'

' Where have you been to-day? You were late.'

' I went to the waterside.'

' To the river?'

' To the river.'

' To the river that runs to the sea,' said Dan musingly, with a dash of regret in his voice. ' What a wonderful sight it must be to see the sea, as we read of it! Would you like to see it, Jo?'

' Dearly, Dan!'

‘ And to be on it ?’

‘ Dearly, Dan !’

Dan looked at Joshua sadly. There was an eager longing in Joshua’s eyes, and an eager longing in the parting of his lips, as he sat with hands clasped upon his knee.

‘ I can see a great many things that I have never seen,’ said Dan ; ‘ see them with my mind, I mean. I can see gardens and fields and trees, almost as they are. I can fancy myself lying in fields with the grass waving about me. I can fancy myself in a forest with the great trees spreading out their great limbs, and I can see the branches bowing to each other as the wind sweeps by them. I can see a little stream running down a hill, and hiding itself in a valley. I can even see a river—but all rivers must be muddy, I think; not bright, like the streams. But I can’t see the sea, Jo. It is too big—too wonderful !’

Wrapt in the contemplation of the subject, Dan and Joshua were silent for a little while.

‘ Ships on the top of water-mountains,’ resumed Dan presently, ‘ then down in a valley like, with curling waves above them. That is what I have read ; but I can’t see it. *Robinson Crusoe* is behind you, Jo.’

Joshua opened the book—it was a favourite one with the lads, as with what lads is it not?—and skimmed down the pages as he turned them over.

‘A raging wave, mountain-like, came rolling astern of us,’ he said.

‘That is the shipwreck,’ said Dan, looking over Joshua’s shoulder. ‘Then here, farther down: “I saw the sea come after me as high as a great hill, and as furious as an enemy.” Think of that! Here is the picture.’

The lads looked for the thousandth time at the rough wood-cut, in which Robinson was depicted casting a look of terror over his shoulder at the curling waves, ten times as tall as himself; his arms were extended, and he was supposed to be running away from the waves; although, according to the picture, nothing short of a miracle could save him.

‘Look!’ said Joshua, turning a few pages back and reading, ‘yonder lies a dreadful monster on the side of that hillock, fast asleep.’

‘I looked where he pointed,’ read Dan—it was a favourite custom with them to read each a few lines at a time—‘and saw a dreadful monster indeed, for it was a terrible great lion that lay on

the side of the shore, under the shade of a piece of the hill that hung as it were a little over him. Xury, says I, you shall go on shore, and kill him.'

' Could you kill a lion, Jo ?' asked Dan, breaking off in his reading.

' I don't know,' said Joshua, considering, and feeling very doubtful of his capability.

Dan resumed the reading :

' I took our biggest gun, which was almost musket-bore, and loaded it with a good charge of powder and with two slugs, and laid it down ; then I loaded another gun with two bullets ; and the third (for we had three pieces) I loaded with five smaller bullets.'

' No, I couldn't kill a lion,' said Joshua, in a tone of disappointed conviction ; ' for I can't fire off a gun. But that occurred nearly two hundred years ago, Dan. I don't suppose there are as many lions now as there used to be.'

' And ships are different, too, to what they were then, Jo,' said Dan, closing the book. ' Stronger and better built. I daresay if it had been a very strong ship that Robinson Crusoe went out in, he wouldn't have been wrecked.'

' I am glad he was, though ; if he hadn't been,

we shouldn't have been able to read about him.
It is beautiful, isn't it ?

'Beautiful to read,' replied Dan. 'But he was dreadfully miserable sometimes ; for twenty-four years and more he had no one to speak to. It appears strange to me that he didn't forget how to speak the English language, and that he didn't go mad. Now, Jo, supposing it was you ! Do you think, if you had no one to speak to for twenty years, that you would be able to speak as well as you do now ? Don't you think you would stammer over a word sometimes, and lose the sense of it ?'

Dan asked these questions so earnestly, that Joshua laughed, and said,

'Upon my word, I don't know, Dan.'

But the time was to come when the memory of Dan's questions came to Joshua's mind with a deep and solemn significance.

'He had his parrot certainly,' continued Dan ; 'but what used he to say to it ? "Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe ! Poor Robin Crusoe ! How came you here ? Where have you been, Robin ?" That wasn't much to say, and to be always saying ; and I am sure that if he kept on saying it for so many years, he must have entirely forgotten what the meaning of it was. You try it—say a

word, or two or three words, for a hundred times. You will begin to wonder what it means before you come to the end.'

'But he had his Bible; and you know what a comfort that was to him.'

'Perhaps that was the reason he didn't go mad. I daresay, too, that some qualities in him were strengthened and came to his aid because he was so strangely situated. What qualities now, Jo?'

'I don't understand you, Dan.'

'I do say things sometimes you don't understand at first, don't I, Jo?'

Joshua nodded good-humouredly.

'I am often puzzled myself to know what I mean. Leaving Robinson Crusoe alone, and speaking of qualities, Jo, take me for an instance. I am a cripple, and shall never be able to go about. And do you know, Jo, that my mind is stronger than it would have been if I were not helpless? I can see things.'

'Can you see anything now, Dan?'

'Yes.'

'What?'

'I can see something that will separate you and me, Jo.'

‘For ever, Dan?’

‘No, not for ever; we shall be together sometimes, and then you can tell me all sorts of things that I shall never be able to see myself.’

‘Don’t you think your legs will ever get strong?’ asked Joshua.

‘Never, Jo; they get worse and worse. And I feel, too, so weak, that I am afraid I shall not have strength to use my crutches much longer. Everything about me—my limbs, and joints, and everything—gets weaker and weaker every day. If it wasn’t for my body, I should be all right. My mind is right. I can talk and think as well as if my body were strong. Stupid bits of flesh and bone!’ he exclaimed, looking at his limbs, and good-humouredly scolding them, ‘why don’t you fly away and leave me?’

At this point of the conversation Mrs. Taylor called out that it was time for Dan to go to bed, so the lads parted. That night Joshua dreamt that he killed a lion; and Dan dreamt that Golden Cloud came out of the flower-pot, and that it wasn’t dead, but only pretending.

Dan had good reason for speaking in the way he did of his body, for it distressed him very much. Soon after the death of Golden Cloud,

he grew so weak and ill that he was confined to his bed. But his mind scarcely seemed to be affected by his bodily ills, and his cheerfulness never deserted him. He had his dear winged companions brought to his bedroom, and they hopped about his bed as contentedly as could be. And there he played with them and took delight in them; and, as he hearkened to their chirrupings, and looked at their pretty forms, a sweet pleasure was in his eyes, a sweet pleasure was in his heart. And this pleasure was enhanced by the presence of Joshua, who spent a great deal of time with his sick friend.

The tender love that existed between the lads was undefiled by a single selfish act or thought. They were one in sympathy and sentiment. Joshua was Dan's almost only companion during his illness. Dan's mother tended him and gave him his physic, which could not do him any good, the doctor said; but Mrs. Taylor's household duties and responsibilities occupied nearly the whole of her time; she could not afford to keep a servant, and she had all the kitchen-work to do. Ellen—Dan's twin sister and Joshua's quondam sweetheart—was often in the room; but, young as she was, she was already being em-

ployed about the house assisting her mother. She scrubbed the floors and washed the clothes ; and, although she was so little that she had to stand on a chair in the tiny yard to hang the clothes on the line, she was as proud of her work, and took as much pleasure in it, as if she were a grown woman, who had been properly brought up. Notwithstanding the onerous nature of her duties, she managed to spend half an hour now and again with Josh and Dan, and would sit quite still listening to the conversation. Her presence in the room was pleasing to the boy-friends, for Ellen was as modest and tidy a little girl as could be met with in a day's walk.

Susan, Dan's unfortunate nursemaid, was a young woman now. But she had a horror of the sick-room. She entertained a secret conviction that she was a murderer, and really had some sort of an idea that if Daniel died she would be taken up and hanged. She was as fascinated as ever with Punch and Judy ; but the fascination had something horrible in it. Often, when she was standing looking at the show—and she was more welcome to the showman than she used to be, for now she sometimes gave him a penny—she would begin to tremble when the hangman

came on the scene with his gallows, and would then fairly run away in a fright. Ever since she had let Daniel slip from her arms out of the window, there had been growing in her mind a fear that something dreadful was following her; and a dozen times a day she would throw a startled look behind her, as if to assure herself that there was nothing horrible there. She had been sufficiently punished for her carelessness. For a good many weeks after it occurred, bad little boys and girls in the neighbourhood used to call after her, ‘Ah-h-h! Who killed her little brother? Ah-h-h!’ If she ran, they ran after her, and hooted her with the dreadful accusation. It took different forms. Now it was, ‘Ah-h-h-h! Who killed her little brother? Ah-h-h-h!’ And now it was, ‘Ah-h-h! Who’ll be hung for killing her little brother? Ah-h-h-h-h!’ Such an effect did this cruel punishment have upon her, that she would wake up in terror in the middle of the night with all her fevered pulses quivering to the cry, ‘Ah-h-h-h! Who’ll be hung for killing her little brother? Ah-h-h-h-h!’ But time, which cures all things, relieved her. The bad boys and girls grew tired of saying the same thing over and over again. A new excitement claimed their attention, and poor Susan was al-

lowed to walk unmolested through the streets. But the effect remained in the terror-flashes that would spring in her eyes, and in the agonised looks of fear that she would throw behind her every now and again, without any apparent cause. These feelings had such a powerful effect upon her that she never entered Dan's room unless she were compelled to do so; and once, when Dan sent for her and asked her to forgive him for being naughty when he was a baby, she was so affected that she did nothing but shed remorseful tears for a week afterwards.

One day, when Dan was playing with the birds, and no other person but he and Joshua was in the room, he said,

‘Do you think the birds know that I am so weak and ill, Jo, dear?’

‘Sometimes I think they do, Dan,’ answered Joshua.

‘Dear little things! You haven’t any idea how weak I really am. But I am strong enough for something.’

‘What, Dan?’

‘If you don’t ask any questions, I sha’n’t tell you any stories,’ replied Dan gaily. ‘Lend me your penknife.’

Joshua gave Dan his penknife, and when he came the next day Dan was cutting strips of wood from one of his crutches.

‘O Dan !’ exclaimed Joshua, bursting into tears.

Dan looked at Joshua, and smiled.

‘O you cry-baby !’ he said. But he said it in a voice of exquisite tenderness ; and he drew Joshua’s head on to the pillow, and he laid his own beside it, and he kissed Joshua’s lips.

‘I shall not want my crutches any more,’ he whispered in Joshua’s ear as thus they lay ; ‘that is all. It isn’t as bad as you think.’

‘You are not going to die, Dan ?’ asked Joshua in a trembling voice.

‘I don’t think I am—yet. It is only because I am almost certain—I feel it, Jo—that I shall be a helpless cripple all my life, and that I shall not be able to move about, even with the help of crutches.’

‘Poor dear Dan !’ said Joshua, checking his sobs with difficulty.

‘Poor Dan ! Not at all ! I can read, I can think, and I can love you, Jo, all the same. I have made up my mind what I am going to do. I shall live in you. You are my friend, and strong

as you are, you can't love me more than I love you. And even if I was to die, dear——'

'Don't say that, Dan; I can't bear to think of it.'

'Why? It isn't dreadful. If I was to die, we should still be friends—we should still love each other. Don't you love Golden Cloud?'

Joshua whispered 'Yes.'

'But Golden Cloud is not here. Yet you love him. And so do I, more than I did when pet was alive. I don't quite know how it is with birds, but I do know how it is with us. If you was here, Jo, and I was There, we should meet again.'

'Amen, Dan!'

'And it is nice to believe and know—as you and I believe and know—that if we were parted, we should come together again by and by; and that perhaps the dear little birds would be with us There as they are here, and that we should love them as we love them now. They are so pretty and harmless that I think God will let them come. Besides, what would the trees do without them?'

'What do you mean, Dan, by saying that you are going to live in me?'

'It is a curious fancy, Jo, but I have thought

of it a good deal, and I want you to think of it too. I want to be with you, although I shall not be able to move. You are going to be a hero, and are going to see strange sights perhaps. I can see farther than you can ; and I know the meaning of your going down to the river-side, as you have done a good many times lately. I know what you will make up your mind to be, although I sha'n't say until you tell me yourself. Well, Jo, I want you to fancy, if I-don't-know-what is happening to you—if you are in any strange place, and are seeing wonderful things—I want you to fancy, “Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him.” Will you do that, Jo, dear ?”

‘ Yes ; wherever I am, and whatever I shall see, I will think, “Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him.”’

‘ That is friendship. This isn’t,’ said Dan, holding up a finger ; ‘this is only a little bit of flesh. If it *is* anywhere about us, it is here ;’ and he took Joshua’s fingers, and pressed them to his heart. Then, after a pause of a few moments, he said, ‘ So don’t cry any more because I am cutting up my crutches ; I am making some new things for the birds.’

They had a concert after that ; and the black-

bird whistled ‘Polly, put the kettle on,’ to its heart’s content; and the tomtit performed certain difficult acrobatic tricks in token of approval.

Dan recovered so far from his sickness as to be able to leave his bed. But it almost appeared as if he was right in saying that he should not want his crutches. He had not sufficient strength in his shoulders to use them. He had to be lifted in and out of bed, and sometimes could not even wash and dress himself. Ellen Taylor was his nurse, and a dear good nurse she proved herself to be. A cross word never passed her lips. She devoted herself to the service of her helpless brother with a very perfect love; and her nature was so beautiful in its gentleness and tenderness that those qualities found expression in her face, and made that beautiful also. Dan had yielded to Joshua’s entreaties not to destroy his crutches. ‘You might be able to use them some day,’ Joshua would say. To which Dan would reply by asking gaily if Joshua had ever heard of a miracle in Stepney. However, he kept his crutches, and Joshua was satisfied. In course of time Joshua began to train a few birds at his own house, and now and then Dan’s parents would allow Dan to be carried to Joshua’s house, and to stop there

for a few days. When that occurred, Dan and Joshua slept together, and would tell stories to each other long after the candle had been blown out—stories of which Joshua was almost always the hero. Joshua had one great difficulty to overcome when he first introduced the birds into his house; that difficulty was the yellow-haired cat, of which mention has already been made. With the usual amiability of her species, the domestic tigress, directly she set eyes upon the birds, determined to make a meal of them, and it required all Joshua's vigilance to prevent the slaughter of the innocents. But he was patient, and firm, and kind, and he so conquered the tigerish propensities of the cat towards the birds, that in a few weeks she began to tolerate them, and in a few weeks more to play with them and to allow them to play with her, and gradually grew so cordial with them that it might have been supposed she had kittened them by mistake.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH DAN GETS WILD NOTIONS INTO HIS HEAD,
AND MAKES SOME VERY BOYISH EXPERIMENTS.

If every farthing of the allowance of pocket-money which Joshua and Dan received from their respective parents had been carefully saved up, it would not have amounted to a very large sum in the course of the year. Insignificant, however, as was the allowance, it sufficed for their small wants, and was made to yield good interest in the way of social enjoyment. The lads did not keep separate accounts. What was Joshua's was Dan's, and what was Dan's was Joshua's. As there were no secret clasps in their minds concealing something which the other was not to share and enjoy, so there was no secret clasp in their money - box which debarred either from spending that which, strictly speaking, belonged to his friend. Dan was the treasurer; the treasury was the money-box which was to have been

Golden Cloud's coffin. Dan's allowance was two-pence a week, which was often in arrears in consequence of his father being too fond of public-houses ; Joshua's allowance was fourpence a week, which he received very regularly. But each of their allowances was supplemented by contributions from independent sources. The motives which prompted these contributions were of a very different nature ; as the following will explain :

‘Something more for the money-box, Dan,’ said Joshua, producing a fourpenny-piece, and dropping it into the box.

‘From the same party, Jo?’ asked Dan.

‘From the same jolly old party, Dan. From the Old Sailor.’

‘Is he nice?’

‘The Old Sailor? You should see him, that’s all.’

‘You have been down to the waterside again, then?’

‘Yes.—Tuck-tuck-janey!’ This latter to the linnet, who came out to have a peep at Joshua, and who, directly it heard the greeting, responded with the sweetest peal of music that mortal ever listened to. When the linnet had finished its

song, the obtrusive and greedy blackbird, determined not to be outdone, and quite ignoring the fact that it had had a very good supper, ordered Polly to put the kettle on, in its most piercing notes.

'Did you go on the river, Jo?' asked Dan.

'Yes. In a boat. Rowing. The Old Sailor says I am getting along famously.'

'I *should* like to see the Old Sailor.'

'I wish you could; but he is such a strange old fellow! He doesn't care for the land. When I tell mother what I am making up my mind to be—what I shall have *made* up my mind then to be—I will coax him to come to our house. I want him to talk to mother about the sea, for she is sure to cry and fret, and although the Old Sailor doesn't think that women are as good as men, he thinks mothers are better.'

Dan laughed a pleasant little laugh.

'That is queer,' he said.

'He knows all about you, and he asks me every day, "How is Dan?"'

'I am glad of that—very glad.'

'So am I. I have told him all about the birds, and how they love you. You would never guess what he said to-day about you.'

'Something very bad, I daresay,' said Dan,

knowing very well, all the time, that it was something good, or Joshua would not tell him.

‘Something *very* bad. He said, “He must be a fine little chap”—meaning you, Dan—“or the birds wouldn’t love him.”’

‘Has he been all over the world, Jo?’

‘All over the world; and O, Dan, he has seen *such* places!’

‘I tell you what we will do,’ said Dan. ‘Tomorrow you shall buy a couple of young bullfinches, and you shall find out some tune the Old Sailor is fond of, and I will teach the bullfinches to whistle it. Then you shall give the birds to the Old Sailor, and say they are a present from me and you.’

‘That will be prime! He will be so pleased!’

‘Have you ever heard him sing, Jo?’

‘Yes,’ answered Joshua, laughing; ‘I have heard him sing,

“Which is the properest day to drink,
Saturday, Sunday, Monday?
Each is the properest day, I think—
Why should I name but one day?
Tell me but yours, I’ll mention my day,
Let us but fix on some day—
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
Saturday, Sunday, or Monday.”’

'I don't think that would do,' said Dan, echoing Joshua's laugh.

'Here's another,' said Joshua, and he played a prelude to 'Poor Tom Bowling,' and sang the first verse :

'Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,
The darling of our crew ;
No more he'll hear the tempest howling,
For death has broach'd him too.
His form was of the manliest beauty,
His heart was kind and soft,
Faithful below Tom did his duty,
But now he's gone aloft,
But now he's gone aloft.'

Joshua sang the words with much tender feeling, but Dan shook his head.

'The birds would never be able to get the spirit of the song into them,' he said, 'and the tune is nothing without that. Never mind—we'll teach them something, and then the Old Sailor shall have them.'

'And I shall tell him they are a present from you alone.'

'No,' said Dan energetically; 'that would spoil it all. They are from you and me together. Can't you guess the reason why ?'

'I believe I can,' replied Joshua, after a little

consideration. ‘The Old Sailor likes me, and you want him to like you because of me, not because of yourself alone ; you want him to like me more because of you—as I am sure he will when he knows you.’

‘That’s it. I want him to know that we love each other, and that we shall always love each other, whether we are together or separated. I want everybody who likes you, Jo, to like me.’

Joshua laid his hand upon Dan’s, which rested on the table, and Dan placed his other hand upon Joshua’s playfully. Their hands were growing to be very unlike. Dan’s hand, as it grew, became more delicate, while Joshua’s grew stronger and more muscular. Dan laughed another pleasant laugh as he remarked the difference between them. ‘That is a proper kind of hand for a hero,’ he said. And then, in a more serious voice, ‘Joshua, do you know I think we can see each other’s thoughts.’ And so, indeed, it appeared as if they could.

The next day the bullfinches were bought, and Dan began to train them. They were a pair of very young birds, not a dozen days old, and the air Dan fixed upon to teach them first was ‘Rule, Britannia.’

So much for Joshua's supplemental contributions to the general fund. Now for Dan's.

'Another sixpence in a piece of paper, Jo!'

'That makes eighteenpence this month, Dan.
Poor Susan!'

'Poor Susan!' echoed Dan.

Susan was very much to be pitied. Looking upon herself as her brother's destroyer, she endeavoured, by offerings of sixpences as often as she could afford them, to atone for the crime—for so she now regarded it—by which she had made him a helpless cripple. These sixpences were not given openly; they were laid, as it were, upon the sacrificial altar in secret. Sometimes the altar was one of Ellen's shoes, and Ellen, when she dressed herself, would feel something sticking in her heel, and discover it to be a sixpence tightly screwed up in a piece of paper, with the words, 'For Dan; from Susan,' written on it; sometimes the altar was one of Dan's pocket-handkerchiefs, and the sixpence was tied up in a knot; sometimes it was a bag of birdseed; sometimes Dan's cap. She was so imbued with a sense of guilt, that she trembled when she met Dan's eye. He was as kind and gentle to her, when he had the opportunity, as he was to all

around him; and, divining her secret remorse, he tried by every means in his power to lessen it. But the feeling that, if Dan died, she was a murderer, was too deeply implanted in her to be ever removed. She lived in constant fear. She was afraid of the dark, and could not sleep without a rushlight near her bedside. Often in the night, on occasions when Dan was weaker than usual, she would creep downstairs, and listen at his bedroom-door to catch the sound of his breathing. If she did not hear it at first, the ghostly echo of the old terrible cry, ‘Ah-h-h-h ! who killed her little brother ? Ah-h-h-h !’ filled the staircase and the passage with dreadful shadows—shadows that seemed to thicken and gather about her as if possessed with a desire to stifle her—and she would press her hands tightly upon her eyes so that she should not see them. Then perhaps she would open Dan’s door quietly, and hearing him breathe, ever so softly, would creep upstairs again, a little more composed; always closing her door quickly, to prevent the shadows on the stairs from coming into her room.

The supplemental contributions from Susan and the Old Sailor were very acceptable to Dan and Joshua, who were both fond of reading.

What was not spent in birds' food was spent in books. They subscribed to two magazines, the *Penny Magazine* and the *Mirror*, which came out weekly; the subscription was a serious one for them, and made a great hole in their pocket-money: it swallowed up threepence per week. The addition of a new book to their modest library was one of the proudest events in their quiet lives. 'New' books is not a strictly correct phrase, for the collection consisted of second-hand volumes, picked up almost at random at old-book stalls. Although their library was a small one, not numbering in its palmiest days more than fifty volumes, it was wonderfully miscellaneous. Now it was a book of travels that Joshua bought; now a book of poems; now an odd volume of a magazine; now a book on natural history; now a speculative book which neither of the boys could understand—not at all a weak reason in favour of its being purchased. Over these books the boys would pore night after night, and extract such marrow from them as best suited their humour. The conversations which arose out of their readings were worth listening to; Dan's observations, especially, were very quaint and original, and gave evidence, not only of good

taste, but of the possession of reflective powers of a high order.

An old book on dreams which Joshua bought for a song, as the saying is, proved especially attractive to Dan. The proper title of the book was the *Philosophy of Dreams*, an ambitious sub-title—the *Triumph of Mind over Matter*—being affixed. Dan read and re-read this book with avidity. In it the writer contended that a person could so command and control his mental forces, as to train himself to dream of events which were actually taking place at a distance from him, at the precise moment they occurred. Space, said the author, was of the smallest consequence. There was one thing, however, that was absolutely necessary—that a perfect sympathy should exist between the dreamer and the person or persons of whom he was dreaming. It was a wildly-speculative book taken at its best, and contained much irrelevant and ridiculous matter; but it was just the kind of book to attract such a lad as Dan, and it set him thinking. ‘Perfect sympathy! Such a sympathy,’ he thought, ‘as exists between me and Jo;’ and he proceeded to read with greater eagerness. The author, in support of his theory, dragged in nearly

all the sciences, and drew largely upon that of phrenology. He explained where certain organs lay, such as wonder, veneration, benevolence, destructiveness, and proceeded somewhat in the following fashion: Say that a person is sleeping, and that he is not disturbed by any special powerful emotion, arising probably from strong anxiety connected with his worldly circumstances. His mind must be at rest, and his sleep be calm and peaceful. Under these circumstances, if a certain organ, say the organ of veneration, be gently pressed, the sleeper will presently dream a dream, in which the sentiment of veneration will be the quality most prominently brought into play. And so with wonder, and benevolence, and combativeness, and other qualities. Having stated this very distinctly, the writer proceeded, as if the mere statement were sufficient proof of its incontestability: say that between the sleeper and the operator a strong and earnest sympathy existed; the operator, selecting in his mind some person with whom they are both acquainted, brings his power of will to bear upon the sleeper. (Here the writer interpolated that the experiment would fail if the organs of concentrativeness and firmness were not more than ordinarily large in the

operator.) With his mind firmly fixed upon the one object, he wills that the sleeper shall dream of their mutual acquaintance; and as he wills it, with all the intensity he can exercise, he gently manipulates the sleeper's organ of tune—which, by the way, the author stated he believed was the only one of the purely intellectual faculties which could be pressed into service. The sleeper will then dream of the selected person, and his sense of melody and the harmony of sound will be gratified. Then, in a decidedly vague manner, as if he had got himself in a tangle from which he did not know how to extricate himself, the author argued that what one person could do to another, he could do also to himself, and that the effect produced upon another person by physical manipulation may be produced upon oneself by a strong concentration of will. During our waking moments, he said, the affective faculties of our mind are brought into play. Thus, we see and wonder; thus, we see and venerate; thus, we see and pity. These faculties or sentiments are excited and make themselves felt without any effort on our part. If, then, circumstances, which previously did not affect us, can thus act upon us without the exercise of voluntary effort to pro-

duce sensation; if circumstances, in which we had no reason to feel the slightest active interest, can cause us to venerate, to pity, to wonder—broadly, to rejoice and to suffer—why should we not be able, by the aid of a powerful sympathy and an earnest desire, to bring into reasoning action the faculties which are thus excited by uninteresting and independent circumstances?

Thus far the author: unconscious that he had fallen into the serious error of confounding the affective with the intellectual faculties, and not appearing to understand that, whereas an affective faculty can be brought into conscious action by independent circumstances, an intellectual faculty requires a direct mental effort before it is excited. His essay was not convincing. He wandered off at tangents; laid down a theory, and, proceeding to establish it, so entangled himself that he lost its connecting threads; and had evidently been unable to properly think out a subject which is not entirely unworthy of consideration. However, he had written his book, and it got into Dan's hands and into Dan's head. Joshua did not understand it a bit, and said so; and when he asked Dan to explain it, Dan could scarcely fit words to what was in his mind.

'Although I cannot explain it very clearly, I can understand it,' said Dan. 'He means to say that a person can see with his mental sight—'

'That is, with his eyes shut,' interrupted Joshua jocularly.

'Certainly, with his eyes shut,' said Dan very decidedly. 'Our eyes are shut when we dream, yet we see things.' (Joshua became serious immediately; the answer was a convincing one.) 'And that proves that we have two senses of sight—one in the eyes, the other in the mind. Haven't you seen rings, and circles, and clouds when you are in bed at night, and before you go to sleep? I can press my face on the pillow and say—not out loud, and yet I say it and can hear it—which shows that all our senses are double.' (In his eagerness to explain what he could scarcely comprehend, Dan was in danger of falling into the same error as the author of the *Triumph of Mind over Matter* had fallen into, that of flying off at tangents: it was with difficulty he could keep to his subject.) 'Well, Jo, I press my head into the pillow, and say, "I will see rings," and presently I see a little ball, black, perhaps, and it grows and grows into rings—like what you see when you throw a stone in

the water—larger and larger, all the different colours of the rainbow ; and then, when they have grown so large as to appear to have lost themselves in space—just like the rings in the water, Jo—another little ball shapes itself in the dark, and gradually becomes visible, and then the rings come and grow and disappear as the others did. When I have seen enough, I say—not out loud again, Jo, but silently as I did before—"I don't want to see any more," and they don't come again. What I can do with rings, I can do with clouds. I say, "I will see clouds," and they come, all colours of blue, from white-blue to black-blue; sometimes I see sunsets.'

'I have seen them too, Dan,' said Joshua; 'I have seen skies with stars in them, just as I have seen them with my eyes wide open.'

'Now, if we can do this,' continued Dan, 'why cannot we do more ?'

'We can't do what he says in this book,' said Joshua, drumming with his fingers on the *Philosophy of Dreams*.

'I don't know. Why should he write all that unless he knew something? There is no harm in trying, at all events. Let me see. Here is a chart of a head, Jo' (turning to a diagram in

the book). ‘Where is combativeness? O, here, at the back of the head, behind the ear. Can you feel it, Jo? Is it a large bump? No; you are going too high up, I am sure. Now you are too much in the middle. Ah! that’s the place, I think.’

These last sentences referred to Joshua’s attempt to find Dan’s organ of combativeness.

‘I don’t feel anything particular, Dan,’ he said.

‘But you feel something, don’t you, Jo?’ asked Dan anxiously. ‘There *is* a bump there, isn’t there?’

‘A very little one,’ answered Joshua, earnestly manipulating Dan’s head, and pressing the bump. ‘Do you feel spiteful?’

‘No,’ said Dan, laughing.

‘There’s a bump twice as large just above your fighting one.’

‘What is that bump?’ said Dan, examining the diagram again. ‘Ah! that must be adhesive ness.’

‘I don’t know what that means.’

‘Give me the dictionary;’ and Dan with eager fingers turned over the pages of an old Walker’s Dictionary. ““Adhesive—sticking, tenacious,””

he read. ‘That is, that I stick to a thing, as I mean to do to this. Now I'll tell you what we'll do, Jo. I shall sleep at your house to-morrow night, and when I am asleep, you shall press my organ of combativeness—put your fingers on it—yes, there; and when I wake I will tell you what I have dreamt of.’

‘All right,’ said Joshua, removing his fingers.

‘You will be able to find the place again?’

‘Yes, Dan.’

‘And you will be sure to keep awake?’

‘Sure, Dan.’

The following night, Joshua waited very patiently until Dan was asleep. He had to wait a long time; for Dan, in consequence of his anxiety, was longer than usual getting to sleep. Once or twice Joshua thought that his friend was in the Land of Nod, and he commenced operations, but he was interrupted by Dan saying drowsily, ‘I am not asleep yet, Jo.’ At length Dan really went off, and then Joshua, very quietly and with great care, felt for Dan's organ of combativeness, and pressed it. Joshua looked at his sleeping friend with anxiety. ‘Perhaps he will hit out at me,’ he thought. But Dan lay perfectly still, and Joshua, after waiting and watching in vain for

some indication of the nature of Dan's sleeping fancies, began to feel very sleepy himself, and went to bed. In the morning, when they were both awake, Joshua asked what Dan had dreamt of.

'I can't remember,' said Dan, rubbing his eyes.

'I pressed your combativeness for a long time, Dan,' said Joshua ; 'and I pressed it so hard that I was almost afraid you would hit out.'

'I didn't, did I ?'

'No ; you were as still as a mouse.'

'I dreamt of something, though,' said Dan, considering. 'O, I remember ; I dreamt of you, Jo ; you were standing on a big ship, with a big telescope in your hand. You had no cap on, and your hair was all flying about.'

'Were there any sailors on the ship ?'

'A good many.'

'Did you quarrel with any of them ?'

'I didn't dream of myself at all.'

'Did any of the sailors quarrel with me ?'

'There wasn't any quarrelling, Jo, that I can remember.'

'So you see,' said Joshua, 'that it is all fudge.'

'I don't see that at all. Now I think of it, it

isn't likely that I should dream of quarrelling with any one or fighting with any one when I was dreaming of you, Jo.'

'Or perhaps you haven't any combativeness, Dan.'

'Perhaps I haven't. It wouldn't be of much use to me if I had, for I shouldn't know how to fight.'

'Or perhaps your combativeness is so small that it won't act,' said Joshua sportively.

'Don't joke about it, Jo,' said Dan. 'You don't know how serious I am, and how disappointed I feel at its being a failure. Will you try it again to-night?'

Joshua, seeing that Dan was very much in earnest, readily promised; and the experiment was repeated that night, with the same result. After that the subject dropped for a time.

But if Dan's organ of adhesiveness—which, phrenologically, means affection, friendship, attachment—was large, it was scarcely more powerful than his organ of concentrativeness. His love for Joshua was perfect. He knew that Joshua's choice of a pursuit would separate him from his friend. When he said to Joshua, 'I shall live in you, Jo,' the words conveyed the expression of no

light feeling, but of a deep earnest longing and desire to be always with his friend—to be always with him, although oceans divided them. If no misfortune had befallen him, if his limbs had been sound and his body strong, Dan would have been intellectually superior to boys in the same station of life as himself. Debarred as he was from their amusements, their anxieties, and their general ways of life, he was thrown, as it were, upon his intellect for consolation. It brought him, by the blessing of God, such consolation that his misfortune might have been construed into a thing to be coveted. There is good in everything.

All Dan's sympathies were with Joshua. Dan admired him for his determination, for his desire to be better than his fellows. It was Dan who first declared that Joshua was to be a hero; and Joshua accepted Dan's dictum with complacency. It threw a halo of romance around his determination not to be a wood-turner and not to do as his father had done before him. The reader, from these remarks, or the incidents that follow, may now or presently understand why the wildly-vague essay on the *Philosophy of Dreams, or the Triumph of Mind over Matter*, took Dan's mind prisoner and so infatuated him.

Referring to the book again, after the failure of the experiments upon his organ of combative-ness, Dan found a few simple directions by which the reader could test, in a minor degree, the power of the mind over the sleeping body. One of the most simple was this: A person, before he goes to sleep, must resolutely make up his mind to wake at a certain hour in the morning. He must say to himself, ‘I want to wake at five o’clock—at five o’clock—at five o’clock; I *will* wake at five o’clock—I *will*—I *will*—I *will* !’ and continue to repeat the words and the determination over and over again until he fell asleep, with the resolve firmly fixed in his mind. If you do this, said the writer, you will awake at five o’clock. Dan tried this experiment the same night—and failed. He repeated it the following night, and the night following that, with the same result. His sleep was disturbed, but that was all. But on the fourth night matters were different. Five o’clock was the hour Dan fixed upon, and nothing was more certain than that on the fourth night Dan woke up at the precise moment. There were two churches in the immediate neighbourhood, and, as he woke, Dan heard the first church-bell toll the hour. One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

Each stroke of the bell was followed by a dismal hum of woful tribulation. Then the other church-bell struck the hour, and each stroke of that was followed by a cheerful ring, bright and crisp and clear. Dan smiled and hugged himself, and went to sleep again, cherishing wild hopes which he dared not confess even to himself. He tried the experiment on the following night, fixing on a different time, half-past three. Undaunted by that and many other failures, he tried again and again, until one night he awoke when it was dark. He waited anxiously to hear the clocks strike. It seemed to be a very long half-hour, but the church-bell struck at last. One. Two. Three. Four. With a droning sound at the end of each stroke, as if a myriad bees, imprisoned in a cell, were giving vent to a long-sustained and simultaneous groan of entreaty to be set free ; or as if the bell were wailing for the hour that was dead. Then the joyous church-bell struck. One. Two. Three. Four. A wedding-peal in each stroke ; sparkling, although invisible, like stars in a clear sky on a frosty night.

Dan went to sleep, almost perfectly happy.

He repeated his experiment every night, until he had a very nearly perfect command over sleep

as far as regarded time, and could wake almost at any hour he desired. Then he took a forward step. While playing with his birds he said, ‘To-night I will dream of you.’ But the thought intervened that he had often dreamt of the birds, and that to dream of them that night would not be very remarkable. So he said, ‘No, I will not dream of the birds that are living; I will dream of Golden Cloud.’ It was a long time now since Golden Cloud had been buried, but Dan had never forgotten his pet. When he went to bed he said, ‘I will dream of Golden Cloud—a pleasant dream.’ And he dwelt upon his wish, and expressed it in words, again and again. That night he dreamt of Golden Cloud, and of its pretty tricks; of its growing old and shaky; of its death and burial. Then he saw something that he had never seen before. He saw it lying quite contented and happy at the bottom of its flower-pot coffin, and when he chirruped to it, it chirruped in return.

He told his dream to Joshua.

‘I have dreamt of Golden Cloud a good many times,’ said Joshua.

‘But I made up my mind especially to dream of Golden Cloud,’ said Dan, ‘and I dreamt of it

the same night. At other times, my dreaming of it was not premeditated. It came in the usual way of dreams.'

'What do you want me to believe from all this, Dan?'

'That, as the author of that book says, you can dream of anything you wish. I scarcely dare believe that I shall be able to dream of what I shall most desire, by and by. By and by, Jo,' he repeated sadly, 'when you and me are parted.'

Joshua threw his arm round Dan's neck.

'And you are doing all this, dear Dan, because you want to dream of me?'

'And because I want to be with you, Jo, and to see things that you see, and never, never to be parted from you.' The wistful tears ran down Dan's cheek as he said these words.

'It would be very wonderful,' said Joshua; 'almost too wonderful. And I shall think, "Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him."'

'Listen again to what he says, Jo,' said Dan, opening the *Triumph of Mind over Matter*. '"A person can so command and control his mental forces as to train himself to dream of events that are actually taking place at a distance from him, at the precise moment they occur."

'And that is what you want to do when I am away, Dan.'

'That is what I want to do when you are away, dear Jo.'

'I am positive you can't do it.'

'Why? I dreamt of Golden Cloud when I wanted to.'

'I can understand that. But how did you dream of Golden Cloud, Dan? You dreamt of him as if he was alive—'

'At first I did; but afterwards I saw him in the flower-pot, dead.'

'And Golden Cloud chirruped to you.'

'Yes, Jo.'

'Think again, Dan. Golden Cloud was dead, and Golden Cloud chirruped to you!'

'Yes, Jo,' faltered Dan, beginning to understand the drift of Joshua's remarks.

'That is not dreaming of things as they are, Dan,' said Joshua gently, taking Dan's hand and patting it. 'If you could dream of Golden Cloud as he is now, you would see nothing of him but a few bones — feathers and flesh all turned to clay. Not a chirrup in him, Dan dear, not a chirrup!'

Dan covered his eyes with his hand, and the

tears came through his fingers. But he soon recovered himself.

‘You are right, Jo,’ he said: ‘yet I’m not quite wrong. The man who wrote that book knew things, depend upon it. He was not a fool. *I* was, to think I could do such wonders in so short a time.’

Dan showed, in the last sentence, that he did not intend to relinquish his desire. He said nothing more about it, however, and in a few minutes the pair of bullfinches were on the table in a little cage, whistling, ‘Rule, Britannia,’ the high notes of which one of the birds took with consummate ease.

CHAPTER V.

JOSHUA MAKES UP HIS MIND TO GO TO SEA.

Who was the Old Sailor?

Simply, an old sailor. Having been a very young sailor indeed once upon a time, a great many years ago now, when, quite a little boy, he ran away from home and went to sea out of sheer love for blue water. In those times many boys did just the same thing, but that kind of boyish romance has been gradually dying away, and is now almost dead. Steam has washed off a great deal of its bright colouring. The taste of the salt spray grew so sweet to the young sailor's mouth, and the sight of the ocean—the waters of which were not always blue, as he had imagined—grew so dear to his eyes, that everything else became as naught to him. And so, faithful to his first love, he had grown from a young sailor to an old sailor. At the present time he was living in a rusty coal-barge, moored near the Tower-stairs; and, although he could see land and houses on

the other side of the water, there was a curl in his great nostrils as if he were smelling the sweet salt spray of the sea, and a staring look in his great blue eyes, as if the grand ocean were before him instead of a dirty river. He was a short thickset man, and his face was deeply indented with small-pox; indeed, so marked were the impressions which that disease had left upon him, that his face looked for all the world like a conglomeration of miniature salt-cellars. His name was Praiseworthy Meddler. The sea was his world—the land was of no importance whatever. Not only was the land of no importance in his eyes, but it was a place to be despised, and the people who inhabited it were an inferior race. From him did Joshua Marvel learn of the glories and the wonders of the ocean, and from him came Joshua's inspiration to be a sailor.

For Joshua had settled upon the road which was to lead him to fame and fortune. By the time that he had made up his mind what was to be his future walk in life, most other lads in the parish of Stepney of the same age and condition as himself were already at work at different businesses, and had already commenced mounting that ladder which led almost always to an average

of something less than thirty-two shillings a week for the natural term of their lives. Although, up to this period of his life, Joshua's career had been a profitless one, as far as earning money was concerned, his time had not been thrown away. The tastes he had acquired were innocent and good, and were destined to bear good fruit in the future. The boyish friendship he had formed was of incalculable value to him; for it was undoubtedly due, in a great measure, to that association that Joshua was kept from contact with bad companions. He had not yet given evidence of the possession of decided character, except what might be gathered from a certain quiet determination of will, inherited from his mother, but stronger in him than in her because of his sex, and from a certain unswerving affection for anything he loved. A phrenologist, examining his head, would probably have found that the organs of firmness and adhesiveness predominated over all his other faculties; and for the rest, something very much as follows. (Let it be understood that no attempt is here being made to give a perfect analysis of Joshua's faculties, but that mention is only being made of those organs which may help to explain, if they be remembered by the reader, and if there

be any truth in phrenology, certain circumstances connected with Joshua's career, the consequences of which may have been varied in another man.) Well, then, adhesiveness and firmness very large; the first of which will account for his strong attachment for Dan, and the second for his determination, notwithstanding his mother's efforts, not to take to wood-turning nor any other trade, but to start in life for himself. Inhabitiveness very small; and as inhabitiveness means a tendency to dwell in one place, the want of that faculty will account for his desire to roam. All his moral and religious faculties—such as benevolence, wonder, veneration, and conscientiousness—were large; what are understood as the semi-intellectual sentiments—constructiveness, imitation, and mirthfulness—he possessed only in a moderate degree; but one, ideality, was largely developed. Four of his intellectual faculties—individuality, language, eventuality, and time—call for especial notice: they were all very small, the smallest of them being eventuality, the especial function of which is a memory of events. Mention being made that his organs of colour and tune were large, this brief analysis of Joshua's phrenological development is completed.

For the purpose of fitting himself for his future career, Joshua had lately spent a great deal of his time at the waterside, and in the course of a few months' experience in boats and barges on the river Thames, had made himself perfectly familiar with all the dangers of the sea. Praiseworthy Meddler had a great deal to do with Joshua's resolve. His attention had been directed to the quiet well-behaved lad, who came down so often to the waterside, and who sat gazing, with unformed thoughts, upon the river. Not upon the other side of it, where tumble-down wharves and melancholy walls were, but along the course of it, as far as its winding form would allow him to do so. Then his imagination followed the river, and gave it pleasanter banks and broader, until he could scarcely see any banks at all, so wide had the river grown; then he followed it farther still, until it merged into an ocean of waters, in which were crowded all the wonders he had read of in books of travel and adventure: wastes of sea, calm and grand in sunlight and moonlight; fire following the ship at night, fire in the waters, as if millions of fire-fish had rushed up from the depths to oppose the wooden monster which ploughed them through; shoals of porpoises, sharks, whales, and

all the wondrous breathing life in the mighty waters ; curling waves lifting up the ship, which afterwards glides down into the valleys ; blood-moons, and such a wealth of stars in the heavens, and such feather-fringed azure clouds as made the heart beat to think of them ; storms, too—dark waters seething and hissing, thunder awfully pealing, lightning-flashes cutting the heavens open, and darting into the sea and cutting that with keen blades of light, then all darker than it was before : all these pictures came to Joshua's mind as, with eager eyes and clasped hands, he sat gazing at the dirty river. He held his breath as the storm-pictures came, but there was no terror in them ; bright or dark, everything he saw was tinged with the romance of youthful imagining. Praiseworthy Meddler spoke first to Joshua, divined his wish, encouraged it, told the lad stories of his own experience, and told them with such heartiness and enthusiasm, and made such a light matter of shipwreck and suchlike despondencies, that Joshua's aspirations grew and grew until he could no longer keep them to himself. And, of course, to whom should he first unbosom himself in plain terms but to his more than brother, Dan ?

He disclosed his intentions in this manner :

he was playing and singing ‘Tom Bowling,’ the words of which he had learnt from old Praiseworthy. He sang the song through to the end, and Dan repeated the last two lines :

‘For though his body’s under hatches,
His soul is gone aloft.’

‘*My* body has been under hatches to-day, Dan,’ said Joshua, ‘although I wasn’t in the same condition as poor Tom Bowling. I daresay’ (with a furtive look at Dan) ‘that I shall often be under hatches.’

‘Ah!’ said Dan. He knew what was coming.

‘The Old Sailor has been telling me such stories, Dan! What do you think? He was taken by a pirate-ship once, and served with them for three months.’

‘As a pirate?’

‘Yes; he has been a pirate. Isn’t that glorious? It was an awful thing, though; the ship he was in—a merchantman—saw the pirate-ship giving chase. They tried to get away, but the pirates had a ship twice as good as theirs, and soon overhauled them. Then the grappling-irons were thrown, and the pirates swarmed into the merchantman, and there was a terrible fight.

Those who were not killed were taken on board the pirate-ship, the Old Sailor among the rest. There were three women with them, and O, Dan, would you believe it?—those devils, the pirates, killed them every one, men and women too, and threw them overboard—killed every one of them but the Old Sailor.'

'How was it that he was saved, Jo?'

'That is a thing he never could make out, he says. It turned him sick to see the pirates slashing away with their cutlasses, but when they came to the women he was almost mad. He was bound to a mast by a strong rope, and when he saw a woman's face turned to him, and looking at him imploringly, although her eyes were almost blinded by blood—'

'O!' cried Dan with a shudder, as if he could see the dreadful picture.

'It was a woman who had had a kind word for every one on the merchant-ship—a lady she was, and everybody loved her,' continued Joshua, with kindling eyes and clenched fists. 'When the Old Sailor saw her looking at him, he gave a yell, and actually broke the rope that bound him. But a dozen pirates had him down on the deck the next moment. He fought with them, and called out

to them, “ Kill me, you devils !” You should hear the Old Sailor tell the story, Dan ! “ Kill me, you devils !” he cried out, and he grappled with them, and hurt some of them. You may guess that they were too many for him. They bound him in such a zig-zag of ropes—round his neck and legs and back and arms — that he couldn’t move, and they kicked him into a corner. There he lay, with his eyes shut, and heard the shrieks of his poor companions, and the splashes in the water as their bodies were thrown overboard. After that there was a great silence. “ Now it is my turn,” he said to himself, and he bit his tongue, so that he should not scream out. But it wasn’t his turn ; some of the pirates came about him, and talked in a lingo he couldn’t understand, and when he thought they were going to slash at him, they went away, and left him lying on the deck alive ! He lay there all night, dozing now and then, and waking up in awful fright ; for every time he dozed, he fancied that he heard the screams of the poor people who had been killed, and that he saw the bloody face of the poor lady he had tried to save. They didn’t give him anything to eat or drink all night ; all they gave him was kicks. “ Then,” said the Old

Sailor, "they're going to starve me!" If he could have moved, he would have thrown himself into the sea, but he was too securely tied. Well, in the morning, the captain, who could speak a little English, came and ordered that the ropes should be loosened. "Now's my time," said the Old Sailor, and he felt quite glad, Dan, he says; and he says, too, that he felt as if he could have died happy if they had given him a chew of tobacco. "Open your eyes, pig of an Englishman!" cried the captain, for the Old Sailor kept his eyes shut all the time. "I sha'n't, pig of the devil!" roared the Old Sailor; but, without meaning it, he did open his eyes. "Look here, pig," said the captain, "you are a strong man, and you ought to be a good sailor." "I'd show you what sort of a sailor I am, if you would cut these infernal——",

"O, Jo!" said Dan, with a warning finger to his lips.

"That is what the Old Sailor said, Dan," continued Joshua. "'I'd show you what sort of a sailor I am, if you would cut these—you know what—ropes, and give me a cutlass or a marlin-spike!'" But the captain only laughed at him; and said, "Now, pig, listen. You will either do

one of two things. You will either be one of us——” “Turn pirate!” cried the Old Sailor ; “no ; I’ll be—you know what, Dan—if I do !” “Very well, pig,” said the captain ; “refuse, and you shall be cut to pieces, finger by finger, and every limb of you. I give you an hour, pig, to think of it.” The Old Sailor says that, if he had had a bit of tobacco, he would have chosen to be killed, even in that dreadful manner, rather than consent to join them. He never in all his life longed so for a thing as he longed then for a quid, as he calls it. It made him mad to see the dark devils chewing their tobacco as they worked. “Anyhow,” he thought, “I may as well live as be killed. I shall get a chance of escape one day.” So when the hour was up, and the captain came, the Old Sailor told him that he would oblige them by not being chopped into mincemeat, if they would give him a chew of tobacco. They gave it to him, and unbound him ; and that is the way he became a pirate.’

‘And how did he get away, Jo?’ asked Dan.

‘That is wonderful, too,’ continued Joshua. ‘He was with them for three months, and saw strange things and bad things, but never took

part in them. They tried to force him to do as they did, but he wouldn't. And he made himself so useful to them, and worked so hard, that it wasn't to their interest to get rid of him.'

'I think the Old Sailor must be a little bit of a hero, Jo,' interrupted Dan.

Joshua laughed heartily at this. ' You will not say so when you see him.'

' Why ? I suppose he is ugly.'

Joshua raised his hand, expressively.

' And weather-beaten, and all that—'

' And knows,' said Joshua, still laughing, ' " Which is the properest day to drink, Saturday, Sunday, Monday ? "'

' Still he may be a hero—not like you, Jo, because you will be handsome.'

' Do you think so ?'

If by some strange chance a picture of Joshua, as he was to be one day, had presented itself to the lads, how they would have wondered and marvelled as to what could have been the youth of such a man as they saw before them ! Look at Joshua now, as he is sitting by Dan's side. A handsome open-faced lad, full of kindly feeling, and with the reflex of a generous loving nature beaming in his eyes. Honest face, bright eyes,

laughing mouth that could be serious, strong limbs, head covered with curls—a beautiful picture of happy boyhood. But no more surprising miracle could have occurred to Dan than to see Joshua, as he saw him then, sitting by his side, and then to look up and see the shadow of what was to come.

‘Do you think so?’ and Joshua laughingly repeated the question.

‘Do I think so?’ said Dan, gazing with pride at his friend. ‘O Mr. Vanity! as if you didn’t know!’

Joshua, laughing more than ever, protested that he had never given it a thought, and promised that he would take a good long look at himself in the glass that very night. At the rate the lads were going on, it appeared as if the Old Sailor’s story would never be completed, and so Daniel said, to put a stop to Joshua’s nonsense.

‘It is all your fault, Dan,’ said Joshua, ‘because you *will* interrupt. Well, when the Old Sailor had been in the ship for three months, it was attacked by a cruiser which had been hunting it down for a long time. All the pirates were taken—the Old Sailor and all—and sold as slaves at Algiers. They wouldn’t believe his story

about his not being a pirate, and he was sold for a slave with the rest of them. He worked in chains in the fields for a good many weeks—he doesn't remember how many—until Lord Exmouth bombarded the forts, and put a stop to Christian slavery. And that is the Old Sailor's pirate-story.'

'And now to return to what we were saying before you commenced,' said Dan—Joshua placed his hands at the back of his head, and interlacing his fingers, looked seriously at Dan, and drew a long breath: 'You have something to tell me, Jo.'

'I have,' said Joshua. 'I have made up my mind what I am going to be. You can guess if you like.'

'I have no need to guess, Jo, dear; I know. I have seen it all along.'

'What is it, then?'

'You are going to sea,' said Dan, striving to speak in a cheerful voice, but failing.

'Yes, I shall go to sea;' and Joshua drew another long breath. 'How did you find it out, Dan the Wise?'

'How did I find it out, Jo the Simple! Haven't I seen it in your eyes for ever so long? Haven't

you been telling me so every day ? It might escape others' notice, but not mine.'

' I told the Old Sailor to-day, and he clapped me on the back and said I was a brave fellow. But he knew it all along, too, he said. And he took me into his cabin — such a cabin, Dan ! — and poured out a tiny glass of rum, and made me drink it. My throat was on fire for an hour afterwards.'

' Have you told mother and father ?'

' No.'

' Tell them at once, Jo. Go home now, and tell them. I want to be left alone to think of it. O Jo, and I am going to lose you !'

Dan had tried hard to control himself, but he now burst into a passion of weeping ; and it is a fact, notwithstanding that they were both big boys, that their heads the next moment were so close together that Dan's tears rolled down both their faces. Joshua's heart was as full as Dan's, and he ran out of the room more to lessen Dan's grief than his own.

Thus it fell out that in the evening, when the members of the Marvel family, variously occupied, were sitting at the kitchen-fire, Joshua said suddenly to his relatives,

‘ I should like to go to sea.’

George Marvel was smoking a long clay-pipe; Mrs. Marvel was darning a pair of worsted stockings, in which scarcely a vestige of their original structure was left; and Sarah Marvel was busily engaged in a writing-lesson, in the execution of which she was materially assisted by her tongue, which, hanging its full length out of her mouth, was making occasional excursions to the corners of her lips. George Marvel took the pipe from his lips and looked at the fire meditatively; Mrs. Marvel burst into tears, and let the worsted stocking, with the needle sticking in it, drop into her lap; and Sarah Marvel, casting a doubtful look at her writing-lesson, every letter in which appeared to be possessed with a peculiar species of drunkenness, removed her eyes to her brother’s face, upon which she gazed with wonder and admiration. So engrossed was she in the contemplation, that she put the inky part of the pen into her mouth, and sucked at it in sheer absence of mind.

‘ Don’t cry, mother,’ said George Marvel.—
‘ What was that you said, Josh?’

‘ I should like to go to sea, father.’

‘ Ah!’ ejaculated Mr. Marvel thoughtfully, looking steadily into the fire.

Joshua was also looking into the fire, and he saw in it, as plain as plain could be, a fiery ship, full-rigged, with fiery ropes and fiery sails, and saw himself, Joshua Marvel, standing on the poop, dressed in gold-laced coat and gold-laced cocked-hat, with a telescope in his hand. For Joshua, without the slightest idea as to how it was all to come about, had made up his mind that he was to be a captain, dressed as Nelson was in a picture which was one of Praiseworthy Meddler's prize possessions, and which occupied the place of honour in the Old Sailor's cabin. While this vision was before Joshua, Mrs. Marvel continued to cry, but in a more subdued manner.

'And so you want to be a sailor, Josh?' queried Mr. Marvel.

'Yes. A sailor first, and then a captain.'

The intermediate grades were of too small importance to be considered.

'I am sure, Josh,' said Mrs. Marvel, crying all the while, 'I don't see what you want to go away for. Why don't you make up your mind even now to apprentice yourself to father's trade and be contented? You might get a little shop of your own in time, if you worked very hard, and it would be pleasant for all of us.'

‘ You be quiet, mother,’ said Mr. Marvel. ‘ What do women know about these things? I’m Joshua’s father, I believe—’

‘ Yes, George, I believe you are,’ sobbed Mrs. Marvel.

‘ And, as Joshua’s father, I tell you again, once and for all, that he’s not going to be a wood-turner. Here’s the old subject come up again with a vengeance! I wish a woman’s clothes were like a woman’s ideas; then they would never wear out. A wood-turner! A pretty thing a wood-turner is! I’ve been a wood-turner all my life, and what better off am I for it?’

‘ I am sure, father, we have been very happy,’ said Mrs. Marvel.

‘ I am not saying anything about that,’ observed Mr. Marvel, expressing in his voice a very small regard for domestic happiness, although, in reality, no man better appreciated it. ‘ What I say is, I’ve been a wood-turner all my life; and what I ask is, what better off am I, or you, or any of us, for it? If Josh likes to be a wood-turner, he can; I have nothing to say against it, except that he’s been a precious long time making up his mind. And if he likes to be a sailor, he can; I have nothing to say against that. I’m

Joshua's father, and, as Joshua's father, I say if Josh likes to make a start in life for himself as a sailor, let him. If I was Josh, I would do the same myself.'

'Thank you, father,' said Joshua.—'And, mother, if you only heard what Mr. Praiseworthy Meddler says of the sea, you would think very differently; I know you would.'

But Mrs. Marvel shook her head and would not be comforted.

'My father was a wood-turner,' said Mr. Marvel, 'and he made me a wood-turner. He never asked me whether I would or I wouldn't, and I didn't have a choice. If he had have asked me, perhaps we shouldn't have gone on pinching and pinching all our lives. Now Joshua's different; he's got his choice: never forget, Josh, that it was your father who gave you the world to pick from—and I think he's acting sensibly, as I should have done if *my* father had given me the chance. But he didn't, and it's too late for a man with his head full of white hairs to commence life all over again.'

And Mr. Marvel fell-to smoking his pipe again, and studying the fire.

'I've never seen the sea myself,' he presently

resumed ; ‘but I’ve read of it, and heard talk of it. There are better lands across the seas than Stepney, for a youngster like Josh. There are lots of chances, too ; and who knows what may happen ?’

‘That’s where it is, father,’ whimpered Mrs. Marvel ; ‘we don’t know what might happen. Suppose Josh is shipwrecked ; what would you say then ? You’d lie awake night after night, father—you know you would—and wish he had been a wood-turner. *I’ve* never seen the sea, and I never want to ; I’ve been happy enough without it. It’s like flying in the face of Providence. And what’s to become of us when we are old, if Josh can’t take care of us ?’

‘Just so, mother. Listen to me, and be sensible. Suppose Josh becomes a wood-turner ; he can’t expect to do better than his father has done. I am not a bad workman myself ; and though Josh might make as good, I don’t think he’d make a better. Now what I say again is—and it’s wonderful what a many times a man has to say a thing before he can drive it into a woman’s head, if she ain’t willing—although I’m a good workman, what better off am I for it ? And what better off would Josh be for it, when he gets

to be as old as I am ? We've commenced to lay by a good many times—haven't we, Maggie?—but we never could keep on with it. First a bit of sickness took it; then a bit of furniture that we couldn't do without took it; then a rise in bread and meat took it; and then a bit of something else took it. You've been a good woman to me, Maggie, and you've pinched all you could for twenty years ; and what has come of all your pinching ? There's that old teapot you used to lay by in. It's at the back of the cupboard now, and it hasn't had a shilling in it for I don't know when's the time. It would be full of dust, mother, only you don't like dust ; and a good job too. But it ain't your fault that it isn't full of something better ; and it ain't my fault. It's all because I've been a wood-turner all my days. And the upshot of it is, that we're not a bit better off now than we were twenty years ago. We're worse off ; for we've spent twenty good years and got nothing for them.'

‘We've got Josh and Sarah,’ Mrs. Marvel ventured to say. The simple woman actually regarded those possessions as of inestimable value—but that is the way of a great many foolish mothers.

Her husband did not heed the remark. He took another pull at his pipe, but drew no smoke from it. His pipe was out; but in his earnestness he puffed away at nothing, and continued :

‘Who is to take care of us, you want to know, when we grow old, if Josh don’t. When Josh grows up, Josh will get married, naturally.’

‘So shall I, father,’ interrupted Sarah, who was listening with the deepest interest to the conversation.

‘Perhaps, Sarah,’ said Mr. Marvel a little dubiously. ‘Girls ain’t like boys; they can’t pick and choose. Josh will get married, naturally; and Josh will have children, naturally. Perhaps he’ll have two; perhaps he’ll have six.’

‘Mrs. Pigeon’s got thirteen,’ remarked Sarah vivaciously.

‘Be quiet, Sarah. Where did you learn manners?—Now if Josh has six children, and, being a wood-turner, doesn’t do any better as a wood-turner than his father has done—and he’s a presumptuous young beggar if he thinks he’s going to do better than me——’

‘I don’t think so, father,’ said Joshua.

‘Never mind. And he’s a presumptuous young beggar if he thinks he’s going to do better than

me,' Mr. Marvel repeated; he relished the roll of the words—‘what’s to become of us then? Josh, if he’s a wood-turner with six children, can’t be expected to keep his old father and mother. He will have enough to do as it is. But if Josh strikes out for himself, who knows what may happen? He may do this, or he may do that; and then we shall be all right.’

There was not the shadow of a doubt that in that house the gray mare was the worse horse, in defiance of the old adage.

‘And as to Joshua’s being shipwrecked,’ continued Mr. Marvel, ‘you know as well as I do, mother, that it would be enough to break my heart. But I don’t believe there’s more danger on the sea than on the land. There was Bill Brackett run over yesterday by a brewer’s dray, and three of his ribs broken. You don’t get run over by a brewer’s dray at sea. And what occurred to William Small a month ago? He was walking along as quiet and inoffensive as could be, when a brick from a scaffold fell upon his head, and knocked every bit of sense clean out of him. They don’t build brick houses on the sea. Why, it might have happened to me, or you, or Josh!’

‘Or me, father,’ cried Sarah, not at all pleased at being deprived of the chance of being knocked on the head by a brick.

‘Or you, Sarah. So, mother, don’t let us have any more talk about shipwrecks.’

‘But if Josh *does* get shipwrecked, father,’ persisted Mrs. Marvel, ‘remember that I warned you beforehand.’

‘But Josh is not going to get shipwrecked,’ exclaimed Mr. Marvel, slightly raising his voice, determined not to tolerate domestic insubordination; ‘therefore, hold your tongue, and say nothing more about it.’

There was one privilege for the possession of which Mr. Marvel had fought many a hard battle in the early days of his married life, and which he now believed he possessed by right of conquest; that was the privilege of having the last word. To all outward appearance Mrs. Marvel respected this privilege; but in reality she set it at defiance. It was a deceptive victory that he had gained; for if he had the last audible word, Mrs. Marvel had the last inaudible one. Woman is a long-suffering creature; she endures much with patience and resignation; but to yield the last word to a man is a sacrifice too great for her

to make. There are, no doubt, instances of such sacrifice ; but they are very rare. Many precious oblations had Mrs. Marvel made in the course of her married life ; but she had not sacrificed the last word upon the domestic altar. True, it was always whispered inly, under her breath ; but it was hers nevertheless ; and she exulted in it. When a woman cannot get what she wants by hook, she gets it by crook, depend upon it. For twenty years had the Marvels lived together man and wife ; and during all that time Mr. Marvel had never known, that in every family conversation and discussion his wife had invariably obtained the victory of the last word ; although sometimes a half-triumphant look in her eyes had caused him to doubt.

So, upon this occasion, notwithstanding the decided tone in which her husband had closed the conversation, Mrs. Marvel bent her head over her worsted stocking, and whispered to herself, half tearfully and half triumphantly :

‘ But if Josh *does* get shipwrecked, father, don’t forget that I warned you beforehand.’

CHAPTER VI.

THE ACTOR AND HIS DAUGHTER.

THAT night, as Joshua was lying half-awake and half-asleep, his mind being filled with pleasant sea-pictures, he was surprised to hear his bedroom-door creak. Without moving in his bed, he turned his eyes towards the door, and, in the indistinct light, he saw his mother enter the room. She opened the door very softly, as if fearful of disturbing him, and she paused for a moment or two in the open space, with her hand raised in a listening attitude. Joshua saw that she believed him to be asleep, and he closed his eyes as she approached the bed. Her movements were so quiet, that he did not know she was close to him, until she gently took his hand and placed it to her lips.' Then he knew that she was kneeling by his bedside, and knew also, by a moisture on his hand, that she was crying. His heart yearned to her, but he did not move. He heard her whisper,

'God protect you, my son!' Then his hand, wet with his mother's tears, was released, and when he reopened his eyes, she was gone.

'Poor mother!' he thought. 'She is unhappy because I am going to sea. I will ask the Old Sailor to come and tell her what a glorious thing the sea is. Perhaps that will make her more comfortable in her mind.'

He acted upon his resolution the very next day, and his efforts were successful. In the evening, he wended his way homewards from the waterside, in a state of ineffable satisfaction because the Old Sailor had promised to come to Stepney, for the express purpose of proving to Mrs. Marvel how superior in every respect the sea was to the land, and what a wise thing Joshua had done in making up his mind to be a sailor.

The lad was in an idle happy humour as he walked down a narrow street, at no great distance from his home. It differed in no respect from the other common streets in the common neighbourhood. All its characteristics were familiar to him. The sad-looking one-story brick houses; the slatternly girls nursing babies, whose name was legion; the troops of children of various ages and in various stages of dirtiness, one of their most

distinguishing insignia being the yawning condition of their boots, there not being a sound boot-lace among the lot of them ; and here and there the melancholy and desponding shops where sweetstuff and cheap provisions were sold. Joshua walked down this poor wobegone street, making it bright with his bright fancies, when his attention was suddenly aroused by the occurrence of something unusual near the bottom of the street.

A large crowd of boys and girls and women was gathered around a person, who was gesticulating and declaiming with startling earnestness. Pushing his way through the throng, Joshua saw before him a tall, spare man, with light hair hanging down to his shoulders. So long and waving was his hair, that it might have belonged to a woman. His gaunt and furrowed face was as smooth as a woman's, and his mouth was large, as were also his teeth, which were peculiarly white and strong. But what most arrested attention were his eyes ; they were of a light-gray colour, large even for his large face, and they had a wandering look in them strangely at variance with the sense of power and firmness that dwelt in every other feature. He was acting the Ghost scenes in *Hamlet* ; in his hand was a wooden

sword, which he sheathed in his ragged coat, and drew and flourished when occasion needed. His fine voice, now deep as a man's, now tender as a woman's, expressed all the passions, and expressed them well. In the library which Dan and Joshua possessed there was an odd volume of Shakespeare's works, and when the street-actor said, in a melancholy dreamy tone,

'It waves me still:—go on, I'll follow thee,'

Joshua remembered (as much from the intelligent action of the actor as from the words themselves) that it was a Ghost whom Hamlet was addressing. The words were so impressively spoken, that Joshua almost fancied he saw a Shade before the man's uplifted hand. Then, when Hamlet cried,

'My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called.—Unhand me, gentlemen!'

(struggling with his visionary opponents and breaking from them, and drawing his wooden sword)

'By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!
I say, away!—Go on, I'll follow thee;—

Joshua experienced a thrill of emotion that only the representation of true passion could have ex-

cited. As the man uttered the last words, Joshua heard a shuddering sigh close to him. Turning his head, he saw Susan, whose face was a perfect encyclopædia of wondering and terrified admiration.

‘Who is he following, Joshua?’ she asked in a whisper, clutching him by the sleeve.

‘The Ghost. Hush!'

‘The Ghost!’ (with a violent shudder.)—
‘Where?’

Joshua pressed her hand, and warned her to be silent, so as not to disturb the man. Susan held his hand tightly in hers, and obeyed.

The Ghost that the actor saw in his mind’s eye was standing behind Susan. The man advanced a step in that direction, and stood with outstretched sword, gazing at the airy nothing. Susan trembled in every limb as the man glared over her shoulder, and she was frightened to move her head, lest she should see the awful vision whose presence was palpable to her senses. The man had commenced the platform-scene, where Hamlet says, ‘Speak; I’ll go no further;’ and the Ghost says, ‘Mark me!’ when a tumult took place. At the words ‘Mark me,’ a vicious boy picked up a piece of mud, and threw it at the man’s face, with the words, ‘Now you’re marked;’

at which several of the boys and girls laughed and clapped their hands. The actor made no answer, but, seizing the boy by the shoulder, held him fast and proceeded with the scene. The boy tried to wriggle himself away, but at every fresh attempt the man's grasp tightened, until, thoroughly desperate, the boy broke into open rebellion.

Actor. Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched:

Boy (struggling violently). Just you let me go, will you ?

Actor. Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouse'd, disappointed, unaneal'd;

Boy (beginning to cry). Come now, let me go, will you ? You're a-hurting of me ! Let me go, you—— (*bad words*).

Actor (calm and indifferent). No reckoning made, but sent
to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

A girl's voice. Pinch him, Billy !

A boy's voice. Kick him, Billy !

Billy did both, but the actor continued.

Actor. O, horrible ! O, horrible ! Most horrible !

Billy. Throw a stone at him, some one !

Actor (sublimely unconscious). If thou hast nature in thee,
bear it not.

A stone was thrown ; and as if this were a signal for a general attack, a shower of stones was hurled at the actor. One of them hit him on the forehead ; hit him so badly that he staggered, and, releasing his hold of Billy, raised his hand to his head, while an expression of pain passed into his face. Hooting and yelling, ‘Look at the mad actor !’ ‘Hoo, hoo ! look at the crazy fool !’—the crowd of boys and girls scampered away, and left the man standing in the road, with only Susan and Joshua for an audience. Joshua was hot with indignation, and Susan, spell-bound by awe and fear, stood motionless by Joshua’s side, while large tears trickled from her eyes into her open mouth.

The blood was oozing from the wound in the man’s forehead, and his long fair hair was crimson-stained. His eyes wandered around distressfully, and a sighing moan died upon his lips. The fire of enthusiasm had fled from his countenance, and in the place of the inspired actor, Joshua saw a man whose face was of a deathly hue, and from whose eyes the light seemed to have departed. With his hand pressed to his forehead, he staggered a dozen yards, and then leant against the wall for support.

‘He is badly hurt, I am afraid,’ said Joshua.

Susan walked swiftly up to the man.

‘Shall we assist you home?’ she said.

‘Home!’ he muttered. ‘No, no! Money! I want money!’

As he spoke he drooped, and would have fallen to the ground but for Joshua, who caught the man on his shoulder, and let him glide gently on to a door-step. Susan wiped the blood from his face with her apron. He looked at her vacantly, closed his eyes, and fainted.

‘He is dying, Joshua!’ cried Susan, her trembling fingers wandering about the man’s face.
‘O, the wicked boys! O, the wicked boys!’

A woman here came out of a house with a cup of cold water, which she sprinkled upon his face. Presently the man sighed, and struggled to his feet, murmuring, ‘Yes, yes; I must go home.’

‘Where do you live?’ asked Joshua. ‘We will assist you.’

He did not answer, but walked slowly on like one in a dream. Assisting but not guiding his steps, Joshua and Susan walked on either side of him, and supported him. Although he scarcely seemed to be awake, he knew his way, and turning down a street even commoner than

its fellows, he stopped at the entrance to a miserable court. Waving his hand as if dismissing them, he walked a few steps down the court, and entered a house, the door of which was open. Impelled partly by curiosity, but chiefly by compassion, Joshua and Susan followed the man into a dark passage, and up a rheumatic flight of stairs, into a room where want and wretchedness made grim holiday.

‘Minnie!’ he muttered hoarsely, and all his strength seemed to desert him as he spoke—
‘Minnie, child! where are you?’

He sank upon the ground with a wild shudder, and lay as if death had overtaken him. At the same moment there issued from the corner of the room where the deepest shadows gathered, a child-girl, so marvellously like him, with her fair waving hair, her large beautifully-shaped mouth, her white teeth, and her great restless gray eyes, that Joshua knew at once that they were father and daughter.

Minnie crept to the man, and sat beside him. She spoke to him, but he did not reply. And then she looked at Joshua and Susan, whose forms were dimly discernible in the gathering gloom.

‘What is the matter with father?’ she asked of them in a faint moaning voice.

‘Some bad boys threw a stone at him and hit him on the forehead,’ Joshua answered. ‘He will be better presently, I hope.’

Minnie did not heed what he said, but felt eagerly in her father’s pockets, and, not finding what she searched for, began to cry.

‘No, no,’ she said, beating her hands together; ‘it is not that. He is weak and ill because he has had nothing to eat. I thought he would have brought home enough to buy some bread, but he hasn’t a penny.’

Joshua remembered the man’s words, ‘Money! I want money!’ and he immediately realised that the poor creatures were in want.

‘Are you hungry, Minnie?’ he asked.

‘I have not had any breakfast,’ she answered wearily. ‘No more has father. Nor any dinner. We had some bread last night. We ate it all up. Father went out to-day, hoping to earn a little money, and he has come home without any. We shall die, I suppose. But I should like something to eat first.’

‘How do you know he has had nothing to eat?’ asked Joshua; the words almost choked him.

Minnie looked up with a plaintive smile.

'If he had had only a hard piece of bread given him,' she said in a tender voice, 'he would have put it into his pocket for me.'

'Stop here, Susan,' said Joshua, a great sob rising in his throat. 'I will be back in ten minutes.'

He ran out of the room and out of the house. Never in his life had he run so fast as he ran now. He rushed into Dan's room, and said, almost breathlessly,

'Where is the money-box, Dan? How much is there in it?'

'Fourteenpence,' said the faithful treasurer, producing the box. 'What a heat you are in, Jo!'

'Never mind that. I want every farthing of the money, Dan. Don't ask me any questions. I will tell you all by and by.'

Dan emptied the money-box upon the table, and Joshua seized the money, and tore out of the house as if for dear life. Soon he was in the actor's room again, with bread and tea. Susan had not been idle during his absence. She had bathed the man's wound, and had wiped the blood and mud from his face and hair. He had recovered from his swoon, and was looking at her gratefully.

Joshua placed the bread before him, and he broke a piece from the loaf and gave it to Minnie, who ate it greedily.

“‘So fair and foul a day I have not seen,’” the man muttered; and both Joshua and Susan thought, ‘How strangely yet how beautifully he speaks !’

Susan made the tea downstairs, and she and Joshua sat quietly by, while the man and his daughter ate like starved wolves. It was a bitterly painful sight to see.

‘I think we had better go now, Susan,’ whispered Joshua.

They would have left the room without a word; but the man said,

‘What is your name, and what are you ?’

‘My name is Joshua Marvel, and I’m going to be a sailor.’

“‘There’s a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft,’” said the actor, “‘To keep watch for the life of poor Jaek.’”

‘That’s what Praiseworthy Meddler says,’ said Joshua, laughing. ‘I shall come and see you again, if you will let me.’

‘Come and welcome.’

‘Good-night, sir.’

‘ Good-night, and God bless you, Joshua Marvel !’

Minnie went to the door with Joshua and Susan, and looking at Joshua, with the tears in her strangely-beautiful eyes, said :

‘ Good-night, and God bless you, Joshua Marvel !’

She raised herself on tiptoe, and Joshua stooped and kissed her. After that, Susan gave her a hug, and she returned to her father and lay down beside him.

When he arrived home, Joshua told Dan of the adventure, and how he had spent the fourteen-pence. Dan nodded his head approvingly.

‘ You did right,’ he said—‘ you always do. I should have done just the same.’

Then they took the odd volume of Shakespeare from the shelf, and read the Ghost scenes in *Hamlet* before they said good-night.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLAINS WHY PRAISEWORTHY MEDDLER REMAINED
A BACHELOR.

HERE is Praiseworthy Meddler, sitting in the best chair in a corner of the fireplace in the little kitchen in Stepney. In his low shoes and loose trousers, and blue shirt open at the throat, he looks every inch a sailor ; and his great red pock-marked face is in keeping with his calling. On the other side of the fireplace, facing Praiseworthy Meddler, is Mr. George Marvel ; next to Praiseworthy Meddler is Mrs. Marvel ; on a stool at her father's feet sits Sarah ; and Joshua sits at the table, watching every shade of expression that passes over his mother's face. The subject-matter of the conversation is the sea ; and Praiseworthy Meddler has been ‘holding forth,’ as is evidenced by his drawing from the bosom of his shirt a blue-cotton pocket-handkerchief, upon which is imprinted a ship of twelve hundred tons burden, A 1 at Lloyd's for an indefinite number

of years. The ship is in full sail, and all its canvas is set to a favourable breeze. Upon this blue vessel Praiseworthy Meddler dabs his red face in a manner curiously suggestive of his face being a deck, and the handkerchief a mop. When he has mopped his deck, which appears to be a perpetually-perspiring one, he spreads his handkerchief over his knee to dry, and says, as being an appropriate tag to what has gone before,

‘There is no place on earth like the sea.’

The Old Sailor was not aware that anything of a paradoxical nature was involved in the statement, or he might not have repeated it :

‘There is no place on earth like the sea. Show me the man who says there is, and I’ll despise him ; if I don’t, I’m a Dutchman ;’ adding, to strengthen his declaration, ‘Or a double Dutchman.’

The man not being forthcoming—probably he was not in the neighbourhood, or, being there, did not wish to be openly despised—Praiseworthy Meddler looked around with the air of one who has the best of the argument, and then produced a piece of pigtail from a mysterious recess, and bit into it as if he were a savage boar biting into the heart of a foe.

‘But the danger, Mr. Meddler,’ suggested Mrs. Marvel in a trembling voice.

‘There is more danger upon land, lady.’

‘There, mother,’ said Mr. Marvel; ‘didn’t I tell you so the other night?’

‘You told her right,’ said Praiseworthy with emphasis. ‘Danger on the sea, lady! What is it to danger on the land? A ship can ride over a wave, let it be ever so high; but a man can’t step over a wagon. Are carts and drays and horses safe? Are gas-pipes safe? And if there *is* danger on the sea, lady—which I don’t deny, mind you, altogether—what does it do? Why, it makes a man of a boy, and it makes a man more of a man.’

‘Hear, *hear*, HEAR!’ exclaimed Mr. Marvel, rapping on the table.

‘Look at me!’ said the enthusiastic sailor. ‘Here am I—I don’t know how many years old, and that’s a fact—I’ve lived on the sea from when I was a boy; and I’ve been blown by rough winds, and I’ve been blinded by storms, and I’ve been wrecked on rocky coasts, and I’ve been as near death, ay, a score of times, as most men have been. Lord love you, my dear! All we’ve got to do is to do our duty; and when we’re called aloft,

we can say, “Ay, ay, Sir!” with a brave heart. What better life than a life on sea is there for boy or man? And doesn’t Saturday night come round?

‘ For all the world’s just like the ropes aboard a ship,
Each man’s rigged out,
A vessel stout,
To take for life a trip.
The shrouds, the stays, the braces,
Are joys, and hopes, and fears;
The halliards, sheets, and traces,
Still as each passion veers,
And whim prevails,
Direct the sails,
As on the sea of life he steers.
Then let the storm
Heaven’s face deform,
And danger press;
Of these in spite, there are some joys
Us jolly tars to bless;
For Saturday night still comes, my boys,
To drink to Poll and Bess.’

Praiseworthy Meddler roared out the song at the top of his voice, as if it were the most natural and appropriate thing for him to do just there and then. The effect of his sudden inspiration was, that every member of the Marvel family, without being previously acquainted with the young ladies referred to, repeated in their honour the refrain of the last two lines :

'For Saturday night still comes, my boys,
To drink to Poll and Bess,'

with such extraordinary enthusiasm, that the carroty-haired cat rose to her feet in alarm, debating within herself the possibility of the Marvel family having suddenly caught a contagious madness from the Old Sailor. Convinced that the matter required looking into, puss walked softly to the door, with the intention of arousing the neighbours; but silence ensuing at the conclusion of the refrain, she became reassured, and stole back to her warm space on the floor, and curled herself up again and blinked at the fire.

After this exertion, Praiseworthy Meddler took the twelve-hundred-ton ship off his knee, and dabbed his face with it energetically.

'What does it amount to,' he continued, 'if the heart's brave? What does it amount to when it is all over, and when one gets to be as old as I am? I'm tough and firm;' and he gave his leg a great slap. 'I'm as young as a younger man; and I know that there's no place on earth like the sea.'

'And you can get promotion, can't you?' asked Joshua eagerly. 'A man needn't be a common sailor all his life?'

'No, Josh, he needn't stick at that, if he's willing and able, and does his duty. I know many a skipper who once on a time was only an able-bodied seaman.'

'Do you hear that, mother?' cried Joshua. 'Now are you satisfied?' and he jumped up and gave her a kiss.

'What is a skipper, Mr. Meddler?' asked Mrs. Marvel with her arm round Joshua's waist. She had a dim notion that a skipper was connected with a skipping-rope, and that she might have been a skipper in her girlhood's days. If that were the case, she could not see what advantage it would be to Joshua to become one.

'A skipper's a captain, mother,' whispered Joshua.

'O!' said Mrs. Marvel, but not quite clear in her mind on the point. 'Then, if I might be so bold, Mr. Meddler——'

But here Mrs. Marvel stopped suddenly and blushed like a girl.

'Ay, ay, lady, go on,' said the Old Sailor encouragingly.

'If I might make so bold,' continued Mrs. Marvel with an effort, 'how is it that you never rose to be a skipper?'

‘O, mother !’ cried Joshua.

‘The question is a sensible one, Joshua,’ said Praiseworthy Meddler slowly, ‘and a right one too ; though, if all able-bodied seamen rose to be skippers, there wouldn’t be ships enough in the world for them. I should have been promoted, I’ve no doubt ; but I was born with something unfortunate, which has stuck to me all my life, and which I have never been able to get rid of.’

‘Is it anything painful?’ asked Mrs. Marvel with womanly solicitude.

Praiseworthy Meddler looked at her with a droll expression on his face, and folded his twelve-hundred-ton ship into very small squares, and laid it in the palm of his left hand, and flattened it with the palm of his right, before he spoke again :

‘It wasn’t my fault, it was my misfortune. I couldn’t help my father’s name being Meddler, and I couldn’t help being a Meddler myself, being his son, you see. My father didn’t like his name any more than I did, but he didn’t know how to change it ; he was born a Meddler, and he died a Meddler. My being a Meddler is the only reason, I do believe, why I am not a skipper this present day of our Lord ; and I don’t think I am

sorry that, when I die, I sha'n't leave any Meddlers behind me.'

' You have never been married, Mr. Meddler ?'

' No, lady ; but I was very near it once, as you shall hear. It was all because of my name that I wasn't. My father didn't like his name, as I have told you. His Christian name was Andrew ; he was a saddler. He got along well enough to set up shop for himself, and one morning he took the shutters down for the first time, and commenced business. Over his window was the sign, "A. Meddler, saddler." There was a rival saddler in the same town, whose name was Straight, and who didn't like my father setting up in opposition to him ; and he put in his window a bill, with this on it : " Have your saddles made and repaired by a Straightforward man, and not by A Meddler." That ruined my father : people laughed at him, instead of dealing with him ; he soon had to shut up shop, and go to work again as a journeyman. He had two children ; the first was a girl, the next was me. I heard that he was very pleased when my sister was born, because she was a girl. " She can marry when she grows up," he said, " and then she will have her husband's name." When I was born, my father wasn't

pleased : he didn't want any more Meddlers, he said. But he couldn't help it ; no more could I. He did what he thought was the very best thing for me—he gave me a fine Christian name to balance my surname : he had me christened Praiseworthy. Now that made it worse. If I was laughed at for being a Meddler, I was laughed at more for being a Praiseworthy Meddler. Once, when I was a young fellow, I did good service in a ship I was serving in. When we came into port, the skipper reported well of me, and the owners sent for me. I went to the office, thinking that I should be promoted for my good services. The firm owned at least a dozen merchant-ships ; and I should have been promoted, if it hadn't been for my name. The owners spoke kindly to me ; and after I had satisfied them that I was fit for promotion, the youngest partner asked my name. I told him Meddler. He smiled, and the other partners smiled. "What other name ?" he asked. "Praiseworthy," I answered ; "Praiseworthy Meddler." He laughed at that, and said that I was the only Praiseworthy Meddler he had ever met. They seemed so tickled at it, that the serious part of the affair slipped clean out of their heads ; they called me an honest fellow, and said that they

would not forget me. They didn't forget me; they gave me five pounds over and above my pay. If it hadn't been for my name, they might have appointed me mate of one of their ships. I was so mad with thinking about it, that I began to hate myself because I was a Meddler. If the name had been something I could have got hold of, I would have strangled it. At last I made up my mind that I would get spliced, and that I would take my lass's name the day I was married. Being on leave, and stopping at my father's house, I told him what I had made up my mind to do. He was a melancholy man—it was his name that made him so, I do believe—and he told me, in his melancholy voice, that it was the best thing I could do, and that he wished he had thought of doing so before he married. "Wipe it out, my boy," he said—"wipe out the unlucky name; sweep all the Meddlers out of the world. It would have been better you had been born with a hump than been born a Meddler." He talked a little wild sometimes, but we were used to it. I began to look about me; and one day I caught sight of a lass who took my fancy. My leave was nearly expired, and I had to join my ship in a few days. I wanted to learn all about the girl, and I was too bash-

ful to do it myself, which is not the usual way of sailors, my dear. So I pointed out the lass to a shipmate, and told him I had taken a fancy to her, and would he get me all the information he could about her. That very night, as I was bolting the street-door, just before going to bed, I heard my shipmate's voice outside in the street. "Is that you, Meddler?" he asked. "Yes, Jack," I answered. "I thought I'd come to tell you at once," he cried; "I've found out all about her. Her father's dead, and her mother's married again, and the lass isn't happy at home." "That makes it all the better for me," I said. "Has she got a sweetheart?" "None that she cares a button for, or that a sailor couldn't cut out," he answered. "Hurrah!" I cried; "I will go and see her to-morrow. Thank you, Jack; good-night." "Good-night," he said, and I heard him walking away. Just then I remembered that I had forgotten the most important thing of all—her name. I unbolted the door, and called after him, "What is her name, Jack?" "Mary Gotobed!" he cried from a distance. "Mary what?" I shouted. "Gotobed!" he cried again. I bolted the door, and went.'

Praiseworthy Meddler, pausing to take breath,

cast another droll look upon his attentive auditors.

‘Gotobed!’ he then resumed. ‘Why, it was worse than Meddler! I couldn’t marry a lass named Gotobed, and take her name; I didn’t want to marry and keep my own name; I couldn’t put them together and make one sensible name out of the two. Gotobed Meddler was as bad as Meddler Gotobed. And the worst of it all was, that I liked the lass. She was as pretty a lass as ever I set eyes on. She looked prettier than ever when I saw her the next day; and, forgetting all about the names, I spoke to her and lost myself.’

‘Lost yourself!’ exclaimed Mrs. Marvel.

‘Yes, my dear,’ said the Old Sailor, with a bashfulness that did not set ill upon him. ‘I fell in love.’

He said this in a confidential hoarse whisper to Mrs. Marvel, as if the youngsters ought not to hear it.

‘O, that!’ said Mrs. Marvel with a smile.

‘But directly she heard what my name was,’ continued the Old Sailor, ‘she burst out laughing, and ran away. I had to go to my ship soon after that; and when I came back again, she was married to some one else. So I gave up the idea of

marrying ; and the name I was born to has stuck to me all my life. And that is the reason why I never married, and why I never became a skipper.'

They made merry over the Old Sailor's story, and over other stories that he told of the sea, and of the chances it afforded a youngster like Joshua of getting on in the world. And towards the close of the evening Mrs. Marvel fairly gave in, and promised that she would not say another word against Joshua's determination to be a sailor. In token of which submission a large jug of grog was compounded, in honour of the Old Sailor ; and when that was drunk, another was compounded in honour of Joshua. Of both of which Praiseworthy Meddler drank so freely, that he staggered home to his barge in a state of semi-inebriation, singing snatches of sea-songs without intermission, until he tumbled into his hammock and fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HAPPY HOLIDAY.

IN after years, when Joshua was many thousands of miles away from Stepney, Dan loved to linger over the memory of one especially happy day which he, and Joshua, and Ellen, and the Old Sailor spent together. Upon that day the sun was rising now; and Dan, lying in bed, was waiting impatiently for the solemn and merry church-bells to strike the hour of seven. His Sunday clothes were smoothly laid out upon a chair, close to his bed. Had the day not been an eventful one, he would not have been allowed to wear his best suit in the middle of the week. When Joshua makes his appearance in Dan's bedroom, it will be seen that he will also be dressed in his best clothes. The secret of all this is, that the lads had received permission from their parents to spend the day with the Old Sailor at the waterside, and were to be taken in

a cart to the Old Sailor's castle—the barge near the Tower Stairs. Twenty times at the least had Dan said to Joshua, ‘I should *so* like to see the Old Sailor, Jo!’ And Joshua, in the most artful manner, had fished for the invitation, which would have been very readily given had the Old Sailor been aware of Joshua’s desire. But Joshua, like a great many other diplomatists who think themselves wise in their generation, went to work in a subtle roundabout way, and so gave himself a vast deal of trouble, which would have been saved had he come straight to the point at once. At length, one day, when the Old Sailor had said, ‘And how is Dan, Josh?’ and Joshua had answered that he thought Dan was beginning to grow strong, he ventured to add, with inward fear and trembling: ‘And he would so much like to see you, sir, and hear some of your sea-stories! When I tell them they don’t sound the same as when you tell them. There’s no salt in them.’ Artful Joshua! ‘Well, my lad,’ the Old Sailor had said with a chuckle (he was not insensible to flattery, the old dog!), ‘why not bring him here to spend the day?’

‘When shall it be, sir?’ asked Joshua, secretly delighted.

‘Next Wednesday, Josh,’ said the Old Sailor.

So next Wednesday it was. And Joshua ran to Dan's house wild with delight, and coaxed Dan's parents into giving their permission.

It was on this very Wednesday morning that Dan was lying awake, waiting for seven o'clock to strike. He awoke at least two hours before the proper time to rise; and those hours appeared to him to be longer than hours ever were before. The ride itself would be an event in Dan's life; but it was not to be compared with what was to come afterwards—the spending of a whole day and night in a house on the water. During the past week Dan had been in a fever of pleasurable anticipation, and in a fever of fright also, lest it should rain upon this particular day. The previous night it *had* rained; and Dan, lying awake for a longer time than usual, had prayed for the rain to go away. Ellen—standing at the window in his bedroom, after she had got out his clean shirt and Sunday clothes, and brushed and smoothed them, and taken up a stitch in them here and there, as women (and girls after them) say—had seen the spots of rain falling, and, joining her prayer to his, had begged very earnestly to the rain to go away and come again another day.

And now the day was dawning; and Dan, open-

ing his eyes, clapped his hands in delight to see the sun shining so brightly upon the broken jug which stood upon the window-sill, and in which was a handful of the sweet-smelling humble wall-flower. The pair of bullfinches which Joshua had bought for the Old Sailor were busily at work in their cage, which was hanging at the window, and were as conscious of the beauty of the morning as the most sensible human being could possibly be. Dan was so delighted that he whistled ‘Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!’ And one of the bullfinches, after abstracting the last hemp-seed from the glass containing their morning meal, immediately piped out with fervid patriotism, ‘For Britons never, *never*, *NE-ver* shall be slaves!’ From this episode the reader will learn that the education of the bullfinches was completed. ‘Rule, Britannia,’ was not their sole vocal accomplishment. They could whistle ‘And did you not hear of a jolly young waterman?’ in a very superior manner. On that day the bullfinches were to be presented to their new master —to whom not a hint had been given of the pleasant surprise in store for him; which made it all the more delightful.

While the patriotic bullfinch was asserting in

the most melodiously-persuasive notes that ‘Britons never, *never*, ne-*ver* shall be slaves,’ its mate was engaged drawing up water in the tiniest little bucket in the world—another of the accomplishments (coming, presumably, under the head of ‘extras’) which patient Dan had taught the birds in order to win the heart of the Old Sailor. The industrious bullfinch had a remarkably rakish eye, which flashed saucily and impatiently as the music fell upon its ears. The slender rope which held the bucket being in its beak, it could not join in the harmony ; but directly the bucket was hauled up and secured, it whetted its whistle, and piped out in opposition :

‘ And did you not hear of a jolly young waterman,
Who at Blackfriars-bridge used for to ply ?
He feathered his oars with such skill and dexterity,
Winning each heart and delighting each eye ;’

repeating, as was its wont, the last line, ‘ Winning each heart and delighting each eye,’ so as to produce a greater effect. I do not assert that the bullfinch actually uttered the words, but I *do* assert positively that it sang the music of them with the most beautiful trills that mortal ever heard.

But there was the solemn church-bell striking

seven o'clock in tones less solemn than usual, and there was the joyous church-bell following suit. And as if the sound had conjured him up, there was Joshua, dressed in his best, and looking so fresh and handsome with his holiday-face on, that Dan might well be proud of him. He had his accordion under his arm, and in one hand was a bunch of flowers which Dan was to give to the Old Sailor, and in the other a glass containing some rape-seed soaked in canary-wine for the birds. They knew as well as possible—knowing little bullfinches!—that Joshua had something nice for them; and as he approached the cage they came as close to him as they could, and, to show their appreciation of his kindness, greeted him with a gush of the sweetest melody. What better beginning could there be for a happy holiday!

When Dan was dressed the lads went into the kitchen to have breakfast. And there was Ellen, as fresh as a daisy. The breakfast things were laid; and there was a clean cloth (not damask, mind!) on the deal table, and there, absolutely, were two new-laid eggs, one for Joshua and one for Dan, which Ellen had bought and paid for with her own money the day before, without saying a word about it. Ellen stooped and kissed Dan, and as she

raised her head Joshua looked at her, and felt a huge longing to take her face between his two hands and kiss her, as he used to do in the time when they played sweethearts together. But he hadn't the courage. Yet he could not help looking at Ellen again and thinking, What a pretty girl Ellen is ! and then, seeing Ellen's eyes fixed upon his, he turned away his head and blushed. And Ellen smiled at that, and, if she had been asked, really could not have told the reason why. Surely never was such a happy commencement to a holiday, and never was such a happy couple as Dan and Joshua ! After all, are not simple pleasures the best ? Are not those the sweetest pleasures that cost the least ?

What put it into Joshua's head ? Was it the sentiment of perfect happiness that actuated the wish ? Or was it a passing shadow, lighter than the lightest cloud, that passed over Ellen's face, as the lads were talking of the coming delights of the day ? It was there but a moment, but Joshua saw it, or thought he did, and thought also that there was regret in it. Or was it Ellen's pretty face, or the little piece of blue ribbon that she had put round her neck, the puss ? For Ellen was fair, and knew what colours best suited

her complexion. Whatever it was that actuated it, there was Joshua saying, just as they had sat down to breakfast and Ellen was pouring out the milk-and-water—you may imagine that there was not a great deal of tea drank in Stepney—there was Joshua saying,

‘Ellen, I wish you were coming with us.’

Ellen’s hand shook so that she spilt some of the milk-and-water, and a spasm rose in her throat, for she had wished the same thing fervently, but had never spoken of it. She checked the spasm, hoping that her emotion would not be noticed, and answered not a word. But she looked. Such a look!

Dan was biting into a slice of bread-and-butter, but directly he heard Joshua’s wish, and saw the yearning look that sprang into Ellen’s eyes, he ceased eating, and leant his head upon his hand.

‘I think I am very selfish,’ he said, and hot tears gushed into his eyes.

In an instant Ellen was by his side, and Ellen’s face was close to his. Any one who saw that action, any one who could understand the quick sympathy that caused her to put her face so close to Dan’s, to show that she knew what he was reproaching himself for, might have been able

to comprehend the depth of unselfish tenderness that dwelt in the soul of that little maid. Ah ! It was only in a kitchen, but how beautiful it was to see !

‘Don’t bother about me, my dear,’ she said almost in a whisper. ‘If you are happy, I am happy.’ And then she added, pretending to be comically indignant, ‘You stupid Dan ! I’ve a good mind to rumple your hair ! You selfish indeed !’

‘*I am* selfish !’ exclaimed Dan, looking up and thinking—just as Joshua had thought—that he had never seen her look so pretty.—‘*I am* selfish ! Joshua !’ he cried, so energetically that Joshua was quite startled. ‘What would the Old Sailor say ?’

‘But, Dan—’ said Ellen.

‘Seriously, Jo,’ said Dan, putting his hand over Ellen’s mouth, ‘what *would* the Old Sailor say ?’

‘The Old Sailor would be delighted.’

‘Now, look here,’ said Dan, with a determination almost comical in its intensity when one considered what inspired it; as if it were a question of tremendous national consequence, or something in which mighty interests were involved ; ‘are you sure ?’

'I am sure he would be delighted, Dan,' replied Joshua without the slightest hesitation.

'It's of no use, Dan and Josh dear,' said Ellen, shaking her head. 'You mustn't think of it. I can't go. Mother wouldn't be able to spare me. Why, don't you know ?'

'Don't I know what, Ellen ?' asked Dan.

'Don't you know that it's washing-day ?' said Ellen with a sharp nod, as if that settled the question.

Dan's head was still resting upon his hand. He pondered for a few moments, and then raising his head, said, 'Good little Ellen ;' and kissed her. 'Now let us have breakfast.'

Breakfast being over, Dan said he wanted to see Susan.

'Tell her I want to speak to her most particularly,' he said to Ellen. 'And, Ellen ! when Susan comes, you go out of the room, and Joshua as well. I want to speak to her quite privately.'

Ellen and Joshua left Susan with Dan, and went into the passage ; which gave Joshua opportunity to ask Ellen if she remembered when he used to be pushed into the coal-cellar. Yes, Ellen remembered it very well indeed ; and they both laughed over the reminiscence.

'How black your face used to be!' exclaimed Ellen.

'And yours too, Ellen!' retorted Joshua saucily. Whereat Ellen blushed, and did not reply.

What passed between Susan and Dan was never divulged. It was nothing very dreadful, you may be sure; for when Dan called to Joshua and Ellen to come in, they found him smiling. Susan was gone, but presently she entered again with a radiant face and nodded to Dan, who nodded to Susan in return, and said gaily,

'Thank you, Susey!'

When Susan went into the passage, she wiped her eyes, and did not once look round to see if anything was behind her. That day, over the washing-tub, Susan was happier than she had been for a long time.

Then Dan rubbed his hands, and said, 'I really think this is going to be the happiest day of my life.'

The happiest day of my life! How often, and with what various meaning, are those words uttered! At dinner-parties, when the invited guest rises to respond to the toast of his health, and commences by saying in tones which falter from emotion, 'This is the happiest day of my life!'

At wedding-feasts, if healths are being proposed, when the bridegroom, the bridegroom's father, and the bride's father, each in his turn declares, 'This is the happiest day of my life!' At the presentation of testimonials, whether to humbug, worthy man, or fool, it is 'The happiest day of my life!' with one and all of them. With copious use of pocket-handkerchief, and with face more suitable for a funeral than for a joyful occasion. But a fig for moralising on such a day as this!

Dan's countenance was suffused with a flush of genuine delight, as he repeated,

'Yes, Ellen, this is going to be the happiest day of my life.'

She gave him a questioning imploring look, which asked the reason why as plainly as any words could put the question.

'Come here, and I'll whisper,' said Dan.

Ellen put her ear close to his mouth, but Dan, instead of whispering, blew into her ear, which caused her to start away with a pleasant shiver, and to cry out that he tickled her. Nothing daunted, however, she placed her ear a second time to his lips; and then he whispered something which made Ellen jump for joy, and hug him round the neck, and tear out of the room as if she were mad.

And almost before you could say ‘Jack Robinson!’ there she was back again, her eyes all aglow with excitement, in her modest Sunday dress and pretty Sunday bonnet.

Susan’s voice was heard calling out,
‘Here’s the cart at the door!’
‘She means our carriage, Jo,’ said Dan merrily, as Joshua carried him out.

And there they were, the three of them in the cart; Dan lying his full length on some straw between Joshua and Ellen, who sat upon a kind of bench in a state of perfect happiness. And there were the bullfinches in their cage, wondering what on earth it all meant, but very blithe and merry notwithstanding. And there was the cart moving along slowly, so that Dan should not be jolted. And there they were, presently, looking at each other, and laughing and nodding pleasantly without any apparent cause.

Not among all the stars that gem the heavens (which some wise men assert are really worlds in which forms that have life fulfil the task ordained by the Master of all the worlds) could there be found a more beautiful world than this was to our young holiday-folk on that bright summer morning. Whitechapel the Dingy was as a flower-

garden in their eyes; and as they rode through the busy neighbourhood a great many persons turned to look at the crazy cart—the springs in which were the only uneasy part of the whole affair—and at the three joyful faces that peered about, enjoying everything, and thankful for everything, from the flying clouds to the lazy gutters.

Soon they were at the waterside; and soon they were on the barge, with the Old Sailor welcoming them in downright sailor fashion. Directly Dan put out his little hand, and felt it imprisoned in the Old Sailor's immense palm, and directly he looked at the great open face, pock-marked as it was, and into the staring pleasant eyes, which returned his look honestly and pleasantly, he nodded to himself in satisfaction. His delight was unbounded when the Old Sailor lifted him tenderly, and placed him in a hammock specially prepared for him. He was deeply impressed by the Old Sailor's thoughtful kindness. The mere fact of his lying in a hammock was entrancing. And there Dan swung, and, gazing in wonder upon the busy life of the flowing river, fancied himself in dreamland.

Before he gave himself up to that trance, however, there was much to be done and much to be

observed. When the Old Sailor lifted him into the hammock and arranged him comfortably—Dan was surprised that those great strong hands could be so light and tender—he said to the Old Sailor, ‘Thank you, sir ;’ and the Old Sailor replied, ‘Ay, ay, my lad,’ just as he had read of, and in just the kind of tone he imagined a sailor would use.

The next thing the Old Sailor did was to rest his hand upon Ellen’s head. Thereupon Joshua said, ‘You don’t mind, Mr. Praiseworthy, do you?’ referring to the liberty they had taken in bringing Ellen without an invitation. ‘Mind !’ the Old Sailor exclaimed. ‘A pretty little lass like this !’ and he stooped and kissed her. And Ellen did not even blush, but seemed to like it. The Old Sailor seemed to like it too. There was something wonderfully charming in his manner of saying ‘Pretty little lass ;’ none but a downright thoroughbred old tar could have said it in such a way. And there was something wonderfully charming in the rough grace with which he accepted the bunch of flowers from Ellen. His first intention was to stick them in the bosom of his shirt; but second consideration led him to reflect that their circumference rendered such a resting-place inappropriate. So he placed them

in a large tin mug, and sprinkled them with water, which glistened on their leaves as freshly as the dew-kisses which glisten in the early morning wherever Nature makes holiday. Then Dan took the cage containing the bullfinches, and asked the Old Sailor to accept the birds as a present from him and Joshua ; and the Old Sailor thanked him in such cordial terms, that his heart was stirred with a fresh delight. Truth to tell, the Old Sailor was mightily gratified with the birds ; but, at the same time, he was mightily puzzled as to what he was to do with them. Prettier little things he had never seen ; but, small and beautiful as they were, they were a responsibility for which he was not prepared. He stood with his legs wide apart, regarding the birds with a perplexed expression on his face ; and Dan, divining what was in his mind, opened the door of the cage, and out hopped the bullfinches, looking about them with an air of having been accustomed to the water all their lives. As if impelled by a sudden desire to fly away and join their mates in distant woodlands, they took wing, and fluttered around the hammock in which Dan lay ; now coming tantalisingly near, and now sailing away with an independent air, as much as

to say, ‘We’re off!’ But when Dan held out his forefinger, they came and perched upon it contentedly. The Old Sailor gazed on the little comedy in admiration. His admiration was increased a hundredfold when Dan, taking his hand, transferred the birds on to his forefinger. He looked at the birds timorously ; the birds looked at him confidently. He was afraid to move lest some mischief should happen to the delicate creatures.

‘Put them in the cage, sir,’ said Dan. The Old Sailor did so. ‘Now,’ continued Dan, ‘I will send you food for them regularly ; and it will not be too much trouble for you to fill this well with fresh water every morning, will it, sir?’

‘No,’ said the Old Sailor. ‘But how will the birds get at the water, my lad ? It is out of their reach.’

‘Ah, you think so, sir. But have you ever been in want of water?’

‘Of fresh water I have, my lad ; not of salt. Was for three days on a raft, with not a drop of fresh water among thirty-seven of us. Two drank salt water, and went raving mad ; one threw himself into the sea.’

‘And the others, sir?’ inquired Dan, immensely interested.

‘The others, my lad, waited and suffered, and prayed for rain. And it came, my lad, and we were saved, by the mercy of God. It was awful suffering; our very eyeballs were blazing with thirst. It would have been a relief to us if we could have cried.’

‘But the heavens cried for you, sir,’ said Dan tenderly.

‘Ay, ay, my lad,’ said the Old Sailor; ‘that’s well said. The heavens cried for us; and we lay on our backs with our mouths open to catch the blessed drops. The salt water that was death to us dashed up from below; and the fresh water that was life to us came down from above. In five minutes we were soaked with the rain; and we sucked at our clothes. We caught enough rain-water to last us until we were picked up by a merchantman, homeward bound from the Indies.’

‘That was good,’ said Dan, feeling as if he had known the Old Sailor all his life. ‘Now, supposing you were wrecked, sir, on a high rock. Here is the rock’ (pointing to the perch on which the bullfinches were standing).

‘Here is the rock,’ repeated the Old Sailor, chiming in readily with Dan’s fancy.

‘And here you are, sir, with another sailor’

(identifying Praiseworthy Meddler and the other sailor with the two bullfinches).

‘And here am I, with another sailor,’ said the Old Sailor attentively, nodding familiarly at his new shipmate in the cage, who, making much too light of the calamity which had befallen them, winked saucily in return.

‘And you are very thirsty.’

‘And I am very thirsty,’ said the Old Sailor, smacking his parched lips.

‘And here, out of your reach, is the water’ (indicating the well) ‘you want to drink.’

‘And here, out of my reach, is the water I want to drink,’ said the Old Sailor, growing more parched.

‘Now, then,’ said Dan, ‘you can’t get at the water with your beak—I mean your mouth—and you can’t reach it with your claws—I mean your hands. Now what do you do?’

‘Ah! what do I do?’ repeated the Old Sailor, not seeing his way out of the difficulty.

‘Why,’ exclaimed Dan enthusiastically, ‘you get a rope—or, if you haven’t got one, you make one out of some strong grass, or out of strips of your clothes; and you get a bucket—or you make one out of a cocoa-nut’ (in his enthusiasm Dan

took the cocoa-nut for granted ; and the Old Sailor accepted its existence on the rock with most implicit faith)—‘ and you attach the cocoa-nut to the rope, and you lower it into the water, and draw it up full. Here you are, doing it.’

And, obedient to Dan’s signal, the bullfinches lowered their tiny bucket into the well and drew it up full, and dipped their beaks into the water as if they were shipwrecked bullfinches, and were nearly dead with raging thirst.

A thoughtful expression stole into the Old Sailor’s face.

‘ They are wise little creatures,’ he said. ‘ I have seen a might of strange things and pretty things ; but this is as pretty as anything I have seen.’

‘ You can teach them anything almost, sir,’ said Dan, who was bent upon making the Old Sailor love the birds.

‘ To climb ropes like a sailor ?’

‘ In a week they could.’ If I had a little ship, with two or three sails and a rope-ladder, I could teach them to climb the ladder and set the sails.’

‘ I daresay, my lad, I daresay.’

‘ Did you ever see a mermaid, sir ?’

This was one of the questions Dan had made up his mind to ask the Old Sailor directly they grew familiar.

‘Yes,’ answered the Old Sailor. ‘I wasn’t very near her; and I was laughed at for saying I had seen her. But I saw her, for all that.’

‘Where was it that you saw her, sir?’

‘In the South Pacific, where there are the ugliest images of men and women, and the most wonderful birds and flowers and trees, in the world. I have walked for miles through forests of wild flowers and strange trees while thousands of parrots were flying about, with their feathers all blue and gold and scarlet and silver.’

‘O, how beautiful!’ exclaimed Dan, twining his fingers together. ‘And they’re there now, sir?’

‘Surely. Your land-lubbers don’t know anything of the world.’

‘Those men and women, sir—are they very ugly?’

‘As ugly as sin can make ’em—brown and copper-coloured and nearly black; cannibals, they are.’

‘That’s very dreadful!’ said Dan with a shiver.

‘What else have you seen, sir?’

‘What would you say to gardens in the sea?’

asked the Old Sailor enthusiastically. ‘ What would you say to fields in the sky ?’

‘ No !’ said Dan in wonder.

‘ Yes, my lad. Gardens in the sea, with the flowers growing and blooming. I only saw land in the sky once ; but it was a sight that can’t be forgot. We were thousands of miles away from land ; but there in the sky was the country, with fields and forests and mountains. We saw it for near an hour ; then it melted away. What would you say to flying fish—showers of ’em ? I heard of a talking fish ; but I never saw it. I shouldn’t wonder, now, if these pretty little birds could talk.’

‘ No, sir,’ said Dan ; ‘ they can’t talk, but they can sing.’

With that he whistled the first stave of ‘ Rule, Britannia ;’ and the bullfinches piped the patriotic song so spiritedly, that the Old Sailor roared out in a hoarse voice, ‘ Rule, Britannia ! Britannia rules the waves !’ and then stopped, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and exclaimed, ‘ Lord, Lord !’ with rapturous bewilderment. But when Dan whistled, ‘ And have you not heard of a jolly young waterman ?’ and the birds answered, ‘ O, yes, we have heard of a jolly young waterman,’ and proceeded to narrate where that jolly

young waterman plied, and how dexterously that jolly young waterman feathered his oars, the Old Sailor was fairly dumbfounded, and sat down in silence, and watched and listened, while Dan put the birds through the whole of their performances.

Ah, what a happy day was that—never, never to be forgotten ! As he lay in his hammock, with a delicious sense of rest upon him, he saw pleasure-boats and barges floating down with the tide, with a happy indolence in keeping with everything about him. What else ? Bright visions in the clouds ; not for himself, but for his friend, his brother, Joshua ; bright visions of beautiful lands and beautiful seas. What did the Old Sailor say ? Gardens in the sea, with the flowers growing and blooming ! ~~He~~ He saw them in the clouds ; and each flower was bright with beauty, and each petal was rimmed with light. Fields in the skies ! There they were, stretching far, far away ; and some one was walking through forests of wild flowers and strange trees. Who was it ? Joshua ! And there were the parrots that the Old Sailor had spoken of, with their feathers of blue and gold and scarlet and silver. But Dan happened to turn his eyes from the clouds to the

water, and dreamland faded. Joshua was rowing on the river.

Bravo, Joshua! How strong he looked, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up to his shoulders; and how well he managed his oars! Not that Dan was much of a judge; but he knew what grace was, and surely he saw that before him when he saw Joshua rowing. Joshua looked at Dan, and smiled and nodded; and Dan clapped his hands. And Joshua, to show how clever he was, made a great sweep with the oars, and fell backwards in the boat, in a most ridiculous position, with his heels in the air. But he was up again like lightning, and recovered his oars, and made so light of it, that Dan, who had caught his breath for an instant, laughed merrily at the mishap, and thought it was good fun. His laugh was echoed by Ellen, who was sitting by his side, and who had also been a little alarmed at first. The industrious maid was making holiday in her own peculiar way. She was not accustomed to sit idly down with her hands in her lap. By some mysterious means she had obtained possession of two of the Old Sailor's shirts which required mending; and there she was stitching away at them, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

for her to do when she came out for a holiday. Did she have a design upon the Old Sailor? It really looked suspiciously like it, if one might judge from the demure glances she cast upon him every now and then, and from the admiring manner in which he returned her artful glances. One thing was certain: she had fairly captivated him; and there is no telling what might have occurred, if he had been thirty years younger.

What more beautiful phase of human nature can be seen than that of an old man with a young heart? Place, side by side, two pictures of old manhood: one, with crafty face; with cautious eyes that never rove; with compressed lips that keep guard on every word; with puckered forehead and eyebrows, from every ugly crevice in which the spirit of ‘You can’t take me in’ peeps out, as if the essence of a fox were in hiding there; —the other, with open face, which says, ‘Read me; I am not afraid;’ with eyes that, be they large or small, enjoy what they see; with full-fleshed wrinkles on forehead and eyebrows; with lips that smile when others smile.

No younger heart ever beat in the breast of an old man than that which beat in the breast of Praiseworthy Meddler. He had never mingled

with children ; yet here he was, at nearly seventy years of age, a hale and hearty old man, with a nature as simple as a child's. What was it that made him so ? Was it because he had lived his youth and manhood away from cities, where the tricky webs of trade teach men to trick as their brethren do, or where the anxiety how to live, and with many, alas, how to get to-morrow's bread, stops the generous flow of a generous nature, and robs life's summer of its brightness ? Or did he inherit it ? If so, how deserving of pity are those children who are born of crafty parents ! There are human mysteries which science has not dared to probe, and there are inherited ills and calamities which philanthropists, up to the present time, have not tried to get to the root of.

Anyhow, here was Praiseworthy Meddler sitting upon the deck of his barge by the side of Ellen, showing her, in the intervals of stitching, how to splice a broken rope, and initiating her into the mysteries of short-splice, long-splice, and eye-splice. Dan, looking on, begged some rope, and proved himself a wonderfully apt scholar, which caused the Old Sailor to remark,

‘ You ought to be a sailor, my lad ; ’ forgetting for the moment that Dan's legs were useless.

‘I should have to work in a hammock, sir,’ said Dan cheerfully.

The Old Sailor blushed.

‘I forgot,’ he said in a gentle voice.

‘There’s the sailor for you, if you like,’ said Dan, pointing to Joshua, who, a couple of hundred yards away, was pulling lazily towards the barge.

‘Ay, ay, my lad ; Joshua has the right stuff in him. He will be a fine strong man.’

‘He is better than strong, sir,’ said Dan ; ‘he is noble, and tender-hearted. If you knew, sir, how good he has been to me, you would admire and love him more. If you knew how gentle he has been to me—how tender, and how self-sacrificing—you would think even better of him than you do. We have been together all our lives ; every day he has come to me as regularly as the sun, and has been to me what the sun is to the day. I look back now that he is going away, and I cannot remember that he has ever given me a cross word or a cross look. And I have been very troublesome sometimes, and very peevish ; but he has borne with it all. Look, sir’—and Dan drew the Old Sailor’s attention to two pieces of rope, one thin and one thick, the

strands of which he had been interweaving—‘this thin rope is me ; this thick rope is Joshua. Now we are spliced, and you can’t pull us apart. Joshua and me are friends for ever and ever !’

The Old Sailor listened attentively, and nodded his head occasionally, to show that he was following Dan’s words, and understood them. Ellen, having mended the Old Sailor’s shirts, sat with her hands folded in her lap, indorsing every word that Dan uttered.

Just then Joshua reached the barge, and having secured the boat, climbed on to the deck. As he did so, eight bells struck.

‘Eight bells,’ said the Old Sailor. ‘Dinner.’

With that, he lifted Dan out of the hammock, and carried him to where dinner was laid on a table which extended fore and aft down the centre of what it would be the wildest extravagance of courtesy to call a saloon, and where everything was prepared in expectation of a storm. Joshua and Ellen followed, and the four of them made a very merry party. Lobsouse and sea-pie were the only dishes, and they were brought in by a Lascar with rings in his ears, whom the Old Sailor called a ‘lubberly swab,’ because he was unmistakably drunk ; and who in return, not-

withstanding his drunken condition, cast upon the Old Sailor an evil look, which flashed from his eyes like a dagger-stroke. This Lascar was the man who had struck eight bells, and who cooked for the Old Sailor, and did odd work about the barge, in return for which he got his victuals and a bunk to sleep in. A lazy indolent rogue, who would do anything, never mind what, for rum and tobacco; a cringing, submissive, treacherous rogue, ripe for the execution of any villainy, on the promise of rum and tobacco ; a rogue who would fawn, and lie, and stab, and humble himself and play Bombastes, for rum and tobacco. They were all he seemed to live for ; they were his Thirty-nine Articles, and he was ready to sell himself for them any day. Of what quality might be the work proposed to him to do, so as to earn the reward, was of the very smallest consequence to him. He gave Ellen such an ugly look of wicked admiration that she was glad when he was gone.

Dinner over, they returned to the deck, and the Old Sailor told them stories of the sea—stories so entralling, that the afternoon glided by like a dream ; and the setting sun was tinged with the glories of the distant lands whither it was wending. They had tea on deck—a delicious tea,

of shrimps, water-cresses, and bread-and-butter. The task of preparing the tea was performed by Ellen and the Old Sailor; and during the performance of this task, it may be confidently stated that the conquest of the Old Sailor was completed, and that he was from that moment, and ever afterwards, her devoted slave. Then they went down, and sat two and two on each side of the table, Joshua and Dan being on one side, and Ellen and the Old Sailor on the other; and they had more sea-stories, and were altogether in a state of supreme happiness.

During the latter part of the evening the conversation turned upon Joshua's approaching voyage.

'Always bear in mind the sailor's watchword, my lad,' said the Old Sailor. '"Along the line the signal ran: England expects that every man this day will do his duty." That's meant not for this day alone, but for always. What a sailor's got to do is to obey. Many a voyage has had a bad ending because of a sailor's forgetting his watchword. Don't you forget it, Josh.'

'I won't, sir.'

'The Merry Andrew, that you're going to make your first voyage in, is a fine ship; the skipper is a

fine skipper—a man he is, and that's what a ship wants—a man, and not an image.' The Old Sailor said this in a tone of exasperation, inspired, possibly, by some tantalising remembrance of a ship commanded by an image instead of a man. 'So stick to your watchword, my lad. It wouldn't be a bad thing now if we were to drink to it.'

The cunning old rascal was only too glad of a chance to get at his grog.

'Bravo!' exclaimed Dan, clapping his hands.

No sooner said than done. Hot water, lemon, sugar, rum, compounded with the skill of an artist. A glass for Joshua, a glass for Dan, a glass for the Old Sailor, and a small glass for Ellen. Not one of them seemed afraid of it—not even Ellen.

'Now, then,' said the Old Sailor, smiling as the steam rose to his nostrils. 'Now, then; the sailor's watchword—Duty, and may Joshua never forget it!'

'Duty, Jo,' said Dan, nodding over his glass to Joshua.

'Duty, Dan,' said Joshua, nodding to Dan.

Ellen said nothing aloud, but whispered something into her glass. Then they drank and sipped their grog, and resumed the conversation.

'Have you been to New Holland, sir?' asked

Dan. The Merry Andrew was bound for New Holland.

‘I was there when I was a youngster,’ replied the Old Sailor, mixing a second glass of grog for himself. ‘It was a wild country then ; I am told it is growing into a wonderful country now. We were six months going out. We had nearly four hundred convicts aboard, most of them in irons. A miserable lot of desperate wretches they were ! They were not well treated, and they knew it. We had to keep close watch over them ; if they could have set themselves free by any means—they talked of it many a time among themselves—they would have captured the ship, and flung us overboard, or something worse. We landed them at Port Phillip, where the British Government wanted to form a settlement.’

‘Why New Holland, sir?’ asked Dan, always eager for information.

‘Discovered by the Dutch in about sixteen hundred,’ replied the Old Sailor oratorically. ‘Victoria was discovered by Captain Cook ; let us drink to him.’ They took a sip—all but the Old Sailor, who scorned sips. ‘Discovered by Captain Cook in seventeen seventy, after he had discovered New Zealand.’

‘Any savages, sir?’

‘Swarms. We were out in a boat exploring, and when we were close in shore, two or three hundred savages came whooping down upon us. We weren’t afraid of them ; we pulled in to shore, and they stopped short about twenty yards from us, jabbering like a lot of black monkeys. They soon got courage enough to come closer to us, and we gave them some grog ; but the ignorant lubbers spit it out of their mouths at first. Then they began to steal things from the boat ; and when we gave them to understand that what was ours wasn’t theirs, they grew saucy. A black fellow caught up the master’s mate and ran away with him.’

‘What did they want with him, sir?’

‘To eat him, of course. We fired over their heads, and they dropped the master’s mate, who ran back to us, glad enough to get free, for he didn’t relish the idea of being made a meal of. But when the savages found that the guns didn’t hurt them, they came whooping up to us again, flourishing their spears. Their faces were painted, and they had swans’ feathers sticking out of their heads. Some of them had skin cloaks on, painted all over with figures of naked men, and some of

them had bones stuck through their nostrils. On they came, yelling and leaping like so many devils, thinking what a fine roast the fattest of us would make. Then we fired and killed one of them. Directly they saw him fall, they scampered off like madmen.'

When the conversation flagged, they had music and singing. Joshua played, and Dan sang a song, and the Old Sailor sang a good many. The best of the Old Sailor's songs was, that they were all about the sea, and that every one of them had a chorus in which the company could join. Of course he sang 'Heave the Lead,' and 'Yeo, heave, ho ! To the windlass let us go, with yo, heave, ho !' and 'Saturday Night at Sea,' and when 'Saturday night did come, my boys, to drink to Poll and Bess,' he flourished his glass, and drank to those young ladies with a will. The number of lovely ladies with whom the Old Sailor made them acquainted was something astonishing. Poor Jack had his Poll, whom he addressed in a not very dignified manner, when he said to her,

'What argues sniv'ling and piping your eye ?
Why, what a—(*hem!*) fool you must be !'

Out of respect for Ellen, the Old Sailor coughed

over a good many words in the songs he sang ; for it must be confessed that there was more swearing in them than was absolutely necessary. Poor Jack, however, who called his Poll a something fool, made up for it in the end by declaring that ‘his heart was his Poll’s’ (a very pretty though somewhat trite sentiment), and ‘his rhino’s his friend’s’ (a very unwise and foolish sentiment, as the world goes). Then there was a Polly whom the lads called so pretty, and who entreated her sweetheart, before he sailed in the good ship the Kitty, to be constant to her ; and who, when he returned without any rhino, turned up her nose at him, as young women do now and then. Then there were Poll in ‘My Poll and my partner Joe’ (it was wonderful how faithless the Polls were), and Poll in ‘Every inch a Sailor,’ who, when poor Haulyard came home in tatters, swore (very unfeminine of her) that she had never seen his face. But honest Ned Haulyard was a philosophical sailor, for he something’d her for a faithless she, and singing went again to sea. The Nancies were a better class of female :

‘I love my duty, love my friend,
Love truth and merit to defend,

To moan their loss who hazard ran ;
I love to take an honest part,
Love beauty, with a spotless heart,
By manners love to show the man ;
To sail through life by honour's breeze—
'Twas all along of loving these
First made me dote on lovely Nan.'

And so on, and so on, with gentle Anna and buxom Nan ; and poor Fanny, who drowned herself in the waves near to the place where hung the trembling pines ; and poor Peggy, who loved a soldier lad (a marine, without doubt) ; and bonny Kate, who lived happily afterwards with Tom Clueline. Ellen joined in the choruses with her sweet voice ; but, strange to say, she had not been asked to sing until the Old Sailor, struck perhaps by a sudden remorse at monopolising the harmony, called upon her for a song. Ellen, nothing loth, asked what song ; and Joshua said,

‘ Sing the song you learnt of mother, Ellen.’

“ ‘ Bread - and - Cheese and Kisses’ ? ” inquired Ellen.

‘ Yes, “ Bread - and - Cheese and Kisses.” — ‘ Tisn’t quite a girl’s song, sir’ (to the Old Sailor) ; ‘ but it is a good song, and Ellen sings it nicely.’

‘ Hooray, then, for “ Bread - and - Cheese and Kisses ! ” ’ cried the Old Sailor, casting a glance

of intense admiration at Ellen, who, without more ado, sang as follows :

BREAD-AND-CHEESE AND KISSES.

One day, when I came home fatigued,
And felt inclined to grumble,
Because my life was one of toil,
Because my lot was humble,
I said to Kate, my darling wife,
In whom my whole life's bliss is,
‘What have you got for dinner, Kate?’
‘Why, bread-and-cheese and kisses !’

Though worn and tired, my heart leaped up
As those plain words she uttered.
Why should I envy those whose bread
Than mine's more thickly buttered ?
I said, ‘We'll have dessert at once.’
‘What's that?’ she asked. ‘Why, this is.’
I kissed her. Ah, what sweeter meal
Than bread-and-cheese and kisses ?

I gazed at her with pure delight ;
She nodded and smiled gaily ;
I said, ‘My love, on such a meal
I'd dine with pleasure daily.

When I but think of you, dear girl,
I pity those fine misses
Who turn their noses up and pout
At bread-and-cheese and kisses.

And when I look on your dear form,
And on your face so homely ;
And when I look in your dear eyes,
And on your dress so comely ;
And when I hold you in my arms,
I laugh at Fortune's misses.
I'm blest in you, content with you,
And bread-and-cheese and kisses.'

Thus ended the happy day.

CHAPTER IX.

MINNIE AND HER SHELL.

So the simple ways of Joshua's simple life were drawing to a close. He had chosen his career, and to-morrow he would be at the end of the quiet groove in which he had hitherto moved, and would step upon rougher roads, to commence the battle which dooms many a fair-promising life to a despairing death, and out of which no one comes without scars and wounds which art and time are powerless to heal. To-morrow he was to leave a father almost too indulgent ; a mother whose heart was as true in its motherly affection for him as the needle is to the pole ; a friend who gave him a love as tender and as pure as that which angels could feel.

During the past week he had been busily engaged in leave-taking, and he had been surprised to find what a number of friends he had. There was not one of the poor neighbours, in the poor

locality in which he had passed his boyhood's days, who had not kind words and good wishes for him, and who did not give them heartily and without stint. Many a hearty hand-shake from men whose hands he had never touched before, and many a motherly kiss from women he had been in the habit of saying only Good-morning to, did Joshua receive. There is a stronger knitting of affection between poor people in poor neighbourhoods than there is among the rich in their wider thoroughfares. Perhaps it is the narrow streets that draw them closer to each other ; perhaps it is the common struggle to keep body and soul together in which they are all engaged ; perhaps it is the unconscious recognition of a higher law of humanity than prevails elsewhere ; perhaps it is the absence of the wider barriers of exclusiveness, among which the smaller and more beautiful flowers of feeling—being so humble and unassuming—are in danger of being lost or overlooked. Anyhow the ties of affection are stronger among the poor. Putting necessity and sickness aside, more mothers nurse their babes from love among the poor than among the rich.

The secret of this unanimity of good-will towards Joshua lay in his uniformly quiet demean-

our and affectionate disposition. The wonderful friendship that existed between Dan and Joshua was a household word in the poor homes round about; there was something so beautiful in it, that they felt a pride in the circumstance of its having been cemented in their midst; and many a tender-hearted woman said that night to their husbands, that they wondered what Dan would do now that Joshua was going away. ‘And Josh too,’ the husband would reply; ‘do you think he won’t miss Dan?’ But the women thought mostly of Dan in that relationship. The romance of the thing had something to do with this general interest in his welfare. Here was a young man, one of their own order, born and bred among them, who, from no contempt of their humble ways of life, but from a distinct desire to do better than they (not to *be* better; that they would have resented), had resolved to go out into the world to carve a way for himself. It was brave and manly; it was daring and heroic. For the world was so wide! Cooped up as *they* were, what did they know of it? What did they see of it? Those of them—the few—who worked at home in their once-a-week shirt-sleeves, could raise their eyes from their work, and see the dull prospect of over

the way; or, resting wearily from their monotonous labour, could stroll to their street-doors, and look up and down the street in a meaningless purposeless manner: like automatons in aprons, with dirty faces and very black finger-nails, coming out of a box and performing a task in which there was necessarily no sense of enjoyment. Those of them—the many—who toiled in workshops other than their homes, saw with the rising and the setting of every sun a few narrow streets within the circumference of a mile, mayhap. Moving always in the same groove, trudging to their workshops every morning, trudging home every night—it was the same thing for them day after day. The humdrum course of time was only marked by the encroachment of gray hairs and white; or by the patching-up of the poor furniture, which grew more rheumatic and groaned more dismally every succeeding season; or by the cracking and dismemberment of cups and saucers and plates; or by the slow death of the impossible figures on the tea-trays—figures which were bright and gay once upon a time, as their owners were upon a certain happy wedding-day. Here, as a type, are three small mugs, the letters upon which are either quite faded away or are denoted by a very mockery

of shrivelled lines, as if their lives were being drawn out to the last stage of miserable attenuation. Once they proclaimed themselves proudly, and in golden letters, ‘For George, a Birthday Present;’ ‘For Mary Ann, with Mother’s Love;’ ‘Charley, for a Good Boy.’ George and Mary Ann and Charley used to clap their little hands, and swing their little legs delightedly, when they and the mugs kept company at breakfast- and tea-time; but now flesh and crockery have grown old, and are fading away in common. The hair on George’s head is very thin, although he is not yet forty years of age; Mary Ann is an anxious-looking mother, with six dirty children, who, as she declares twenty times a day, are enough to worry the life out of her; and Charley has turned out anything but ‘a Good Boy,’ being much too fond of public-houses. With such-like uninteresting variations, the lives of George and Mary Ann and Charley were typical of the lives of all the poor people amongst whom the Marvels lived. From the cradle to the grave, everything the same: the same streets, the same breakfasts, the same dinners, the same uneventful routine of existence, the only visible signs upon the record being the deepening of wrinkles and the whitening of hairs.

But they were happy enough notwithstanding ; and if their pulses were stirred into quicker motion when they shook Joshua's hand and wished him good luck, there was no envy towards him in their minds, and no feeling of discontent marred the genuineness of their God-speed. When at candle-time they spoke of Joshua and of the world which he was going to see, some of the women said that it would have been better if 'you, John,' or 'you, William,' 'had struck out for yourself when you were young ;' and John and William assenting, sighed to think that it was too late for them to make a new start. Well, their time was past ; the tide which they might have taken at the flood, but did not, would never come again to their life's shore. Joshua *had* taken it at the flood, and would be afloat to-morrow ; good-luck be with him ! In the heartiness of their good wishes there was no expressed consciousness that there was as much heroism in their quiet lives as in the lives of great heroes and daring adventurers ; which very unconsciousness and unexpressed abnegation made that heroism (begging Mr. Ruskin's pardon for calling it so) all the grander.

Joshua had bidden the Old Sailor good-bye. The dear simple old fellow had given Joshua some

golden rules to go by ; had enjoined him to be respectful and submissive ; to learn all he could ; to be cheerful always, and to do his work willingly, however hard it seemed ; not to mix himself up in the men's quarrels or grumblings ; had told him how that some officers were querulous, and some were tyrannical, but that he could always keep himself out of mischief by obeying orders ; and had impressed upon him, more particularly than all, the value of the golden motto —Duty. ‘Keep that for your watchword, my lad,’ said the Old Sailor, ‘and you will do.’

‘I am glad it is nearly all over,’ said Joshua to Dan. ‘I have only two or three more to say good-bye to, with the exception of mother and father, and Ellen and you, dear Dan !’

‘There’s Susan, Jo,’ said Dan after a pause. ‘I wish you could see her before you go.’

‘I wish so too. I am going now to say good-bye to Minnie and her father.’

‘Is he better, Jo ?’

‘I haven’t seen him for a week ; but I don’t think he is ever quite right here ;’ touching his forehead.

They were speaking of the street actor, whose name was Basil Kindred.

‘ And Minnie is very pretty, you say !’

‘ Very pretty, but with such strange ways, Dan, as I have told you before.’

‘ Yes,’ said Dan, looking earnestly at Joshua.

‘ Sometimes like a woman, which she is not ; sometimes like a little child, which she is not. Yet for all she is so strange, one can’t help loving her and pitying her.’

‘ Is she at all like Ellen, Jo ?’

‘ Minnie is not like Ellen,’ said Joshua, considering. ‘ Ellen’s face is calm and peaceful ; Minnie’s is grander, larger. Minnie is the kind of girl for a heroine, and Ellen is not, I think. She is too peaceful. Say that Ellen is like a lake, Minnie is like the sea.’

A quiet smile passed over Dan’s lips, yet a regretful one too.

‘ You don’t know Ellen, Jo,’ he said simply. ‘ Give me the lake.’

‘ And me the sea,’ said Joshua, not meaning it at all with reference to the girls, but literally, with reference to his choice of a profession.

From the first part of this conversation it will be gathered that Susan Taylor had left her home, and had chosen to keep her residence a secret from her family. She was not to blame for it ; for she

had been most unhappy in the family mansion of the Taylors. Although she earned her own living and paid for her board and lodging, her father, a drunken lazy mechanic, had lately been pestering her for small loans, to be spent of course at the public-house. These she could not afford to give him ; and when he found that she would not assist him, he quarrelled with her. He twitted her about her ungainly person, jeered at her strange mannerisms, pricked her with domestic pins and needles, and made her life so miserable, that she was glad when the culminating quarrel gave her the opportunity to run away.

She had never had a friend. Nearly every girl has a girl-companion with whom she exchanges little confidences, and whom she consults as to the fashion of the new bonnet and how it is to be trimmed, the pattern of the new dress and how many flounces it is to have, the colour of the new piece of ribbon and how it should be worn, the personal appearance and intentions of the last new admirer and how he is to be treated. Susan never had such a companion ; worse than that, she had never had a sweetheart. She had grown to woman's estate without ever having experienced the pleasures of courtship, either as a child or as

a woman. No little boy had taken a liking to her when she was a little girl ; and when she grew to be a young woman, no young man had cast a favourable eye upon her. Sooth to say, there was nothing singular in the circumstance ; for she was as little attractive, externally, as a young woman well could be.

If it were necessary to define and describe her with brevity, a happy definition and description might be given in two simple words—Joints and Knobs. Susan Taylor was all Joints and Knobs, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet. There was not a straight line about her ; every square inch of her frame was broken by a joint or intersected by a knob. Her face did not contain one perfect feature. Bones, with sharp rugged outlines, asserted themselves in her cheeks, in her chin, in her nose (most aggressively there), and in the arches of her eyes. Her shoulders were suggestive of nothing but salt-cellars ; her fingers were covered with knuckles ; her arms were all elbows ; and her knees, as she walked, forced themselves into notice with offensive demonstrativeness. There was nothing round and soft about her. Every part of her was suggestive of Bone ; she was so replete with mysterious and compli-

cated angles that she might be said to resemble a mathematical torture. Her angular proportions, broken here by a joint, or intersected there by a knob, did not agree with one another. As not one of them would accept a subordinate position, they were necessarily on the very worst of terms: like a regiment in which every soldier insisted on being colonel, and struggled for the position. The result was Anatomical Confusion.

Cupid is popularly represented to be a mischievous young imp, who delights in tying persons together who are not in the least suited to each other, and as being so reckless and indiscriminate in the use of the metaphorical arrow, which he is everlastingly fixing to that metaphorical bow with such malicious nicety, that the right man seldom finds himself in the right place, and the right woman is similarly unfortunate. As a consequence of this eccentric and inhuman conduct, long men and short women, and long women and short men, get absurdly matched, and the mental disparity is often found to be no less than the disparity in limb and bulk. But never, surely, did that tricksy youngster (who is so convenient to writers as a reference, and in various other ways, that they cannot be sufficiently grateful for his

mythological existence) play a stranger prank than when he made Susan Taylor and Basil Kindred acquainted with each other. The evening on which Susan, for the first time, saw Basil Kindred act the Ghost scenes in *Hamlet*, marked an era in her life not less important than that sad era which was commenced by her letting her brother Daniel fall from her arms out of the window on to the cruel stones. For if ever woman fell in love (which is so violently suggestive that it may well be doubted) with man, Susan Taylor, on that evening, fell in love with Basil Kindred.

But Susan was not the woman to exhibit her passion in words. In another fashion she did exhibit it : in the best fashion that devotion can shew itself—in deeds. She was not a cunning woman, nor a wise one either. Being from the very infirmities of her nature a kind of social outcast, she was not likely to consider what the world would say of any action of hers. And here was an anomaly ; she was neither foolish enough nor wise enough to consider what the world would say; yet had she considered that her conduct was open to censure, she would not have swerved a hair's-breadth because of the world's opinion ; and this very independence proceeded not from a hardened

nature, but from a nature utterly simple. So she did what a very considerable majority of the busy bees in this busy world would consider either a very foolish thing or something worse. When she left her home she rented a room in the miserable house in which Basil Kindred and his daughter resided. She did this because she loved him ; and yet looking for no return of her passion, she did it so that she might make herself useful to him and to Minnie. The living she earned as a dress-maker was a poor and a scanty one enough ; but she managed, out of her small earnings, to contribute some little towards the comfort of the couple whose acquaintance she had so strangely made.

Joshua was always certain of a warm welcome from Basil and Minnie ; an affectionate intimacy had sprung up between them, and he had spent many a pleasant hour in their company. But in the first flush of their intimacy he had been sorely puzzled by Basil Kindred's strange ways and oft-times stranger remarks ; the wandering restlessness of his eyes, and the no less wandering nature of his speech, engendered grave doubts whether he was quite right in his mind. And as Joshua looked from Basil's fine mobile face to that of his daughter, so like

her father's in all its grand and beautiful outlines, it distressed him to think that her intellect also might be tainted with her father's disease. It might not be ; it might be merely the want of proper moral training that induced her to be so strangely incoherent, so reckless and defiant, and yet at the same time so singularly tender in her conduct. With Minnie everything was right or wrong according to the way in which it affected herself. She recognised no general law as guiding such and such a principle or sentiment. There was this similarity and this difference between Minnie and Susan : they both ignored the world's opinion and the world's judgment of their actions. But where Susan would be meek, Minnie would be defiant ; where Susan would offend through ignorance, Minnie would offend consciously, and be at the same time ready to justify herself and argue the point ; which latter she would do, of course, only from her point of view. Supposing that it could be reduced to weights and measures, Minnie would have been content to place herself and her affections on one side of the scale, and all the world on the other, with the positive conviction that she would tip the scale.

She was very affectionate and docile to Joshua ; she looked up to him with a kind of adoration, and this tacit acknowledgment of his superiority was pleasing to his vanity. He was her hero, and she worshipped him, and showed that she did so ; and he, too dangerously regarding her as a child, received her worship, and was gratified by it. And so she drifted.

Now as he entered the room, Minnie sprang towards him with a joyous exclamation, and taking his hand, held it tightly clasped in hers as she led him to a seat. The room was not so bare of furniture as it was when he first saw it. He looked round for Basil Kindred.

‘ Father is not at home, Joshua,’ said Minnie. ‘ He will be in soon, I daresay.’ She pushed him softly into a chair, and sat on the ground at his feet. ‘ I am so glad you have come !’

‘ But I don’t think I have time to stay.’

‘ You mustn’t go ; you mustn’t go,’ said Minnie, drawing his arm round her neck. ‘ I shall be so lonely if you do.’

‘ But you were alone before I came in, Minnie.’

‘ Yes,’ returned Minnie ; ‘ but I did not feel lonely then. I shall now, if you go away.’

‘Then I will stop for a little while,’ said Joshua, humouring her.

‘Always good !’ said Minnie gratefully, resting her lips upon her hand,—‘always good !’

‘Why did you not feel lonely before I came, Minnie ?’

‘I was thinking.’

‘Of what ?’

‘Of long, long ago, when father was different to what he is now.’

‘It could not have been so long, long ago, little Minnie’—here came a little caressing action from the child—‘you are only—how old ?’

‘Fourteen.’

‘And fourteen years ago is not so long, long ago, little Minnie.’

Minnie repeated her caressing action.

‘To you it isn’t perhaps, but it is to me. It seems almost,’ she said, placing Joshua’s hand upon her eyes, and closing them, ‘as if I had nothing to do with it. Yet I must have had ; for mother was mixed up with what I was thinking.’

‘But I shall think of something else now that you are here,’ she said presently. ‘I am going to listen.’

With the hand that was free she took some-

thing from her pocket, and placing it to her ear, bent her head closer to the ground. She was so long in that attitude of watchful silence, that Joshua cried ‘Minnie!’ to arouse her.

‘Hush!’ she said; ‘you must not interrupt me. I am listening. I can almost hear it speak.’

‘Hear what speak?’ asked Joshua, wondering.

Minnie directed his fingers to her ear, and he felt something smooth and cold.

‘It is a shell,’ she said softly, ‘and I am listening to the sea.’

‘Ah,’ said Joshua in a voice as soft as hers, ‘that is because I am going to be a sailor.’

‘For that reason. Yes. Call me little Minnie.’

‘Little Minnie!’ said Joshua tenderly; for Minnie’s voice and manner were very winsome, and he could not help thinking how quaintly pretty her fancy was.

‘Little Minnie, little Minnie!’ whispered Minnie in so soft a tone that Joshua could scarcely hear it,—‘little Minnie, little Minnie! The sea is singing it. How kind the sea is! and how soft and gentle! I should like to go to sleep like this.’

‘Does the shell sing anything else, little Minnie?’

‘Listen! Ah, but you cannot hear! It is singing, “Little Minnie, little Minnie, Joshua is going to be a sailor. Little Minnie, little Minnie, would you like to go with him?”’

‘And you answer?’

‘Yes, yes, yes! I should like to go with him, and hear the sea always singing like this. I should like to go with him because——’ But here Minnie stopped.

‘Because what?’

‘Because nothing,’ said Minnie, taking the shell from her ear. ‘Now the sea is gone, and the singing is gone, and we are waiting at home for father.’

‘What for, Minnie? What am I waiting at home for father for?’

‘To see him of course,’ answered Minnie.

‘And to wish him and you good-bye,’ said Joshua.

‘Good-bye!’ echoed the child, with a sudden look of distress in her large gray eyes. ‘So soon!’

‘Yes. My ship sails to-morrow.’

‘And this is the last day we shall see you,’ she said, her tears falling upon his hand.

‘The last day for a little while, little Minnie,’ he said, striving to speak cheerfully.

‘For how long?’ asked the child, bending her head, so that her fair hair fell over her face.

‘For a year, perhaps, Minnie,’ he answered.

‘For a long, long year,’ she said sorrowfully.
‘You will not do as mother did, will you?’

‘How was that?’

‘She went away from us one afternoon, and was to come back at night. And it rained—O, so dreadfully!—that night. We were lodging under some trees, father, mother, and I. Father was ill—very ill, but not with the same kind of illness that he has now sometimes. He had a fever. And mother went into the town to get something for us to eat—as you did that night when the bad boys threw a stone at father, and you brought him home. When father woke, we went in search of her. But I never remember seeing mother again. And you are going away, and perhaps I shall never see you again.’

‘What does the shell say, Minnie?’

Minnie placed the shell to her ear.

‘I cannot make out anything,’ she said in a voice of pain. ‘It isn’t singing now; it is moaning and sighing.’

He took the shell and listened.

‘It will speak to me, because I am a sailor.’

‘ And it says ?’ asked Minnie anxiously.

‘ And it says—no, it sings—“ Little Minnie, little Minnie, Joshua is going to sea, and Joshua will come back, please God, in a year, with beautiful shells and wonderful stories for you and all his friends. So, little Minnie, little Minnie, look happy ; for there is nothing to be sorrowful at.’

‘ Ah !’ said Minnie in less sorrowful tones, ‘ if I was a woman, and loved anybody very much, I would not let him go away by himself.’

‘ Why, what would you do ?’

‘ I would follow him.’ And she pulled Joshua’s head down to hers, and whispered, ‘ I should like to go to sea with you.’

‘ Would you indeed, miss !’

‘ Yes ; for I love you, O, so much !’ whispered the child innocently in the same low tones. ‘ But you wouldn’t let me go, would you ?’

‘ I should think not. A nice sailor you would make ; a weak little thing like you !’

The girl sprang from her crouching attitude, and stood upright. As she did so, expressing in her action what her meaning was, Joshua noticed for the first time that she was growing to be large-limbed and strong. She tossed her hair from her face, and said,

‘Father says I shall be a tall woman.’

‘Well?’

‘Well,’ she repeated half-proudly and half-bashfully, ‘I should not make such a bad sailor, after all.’ And then, with a motion thoroughly childlike, she knelt on the ground before him; and placing her elbows on his knees, rested her chin in her upturned palms, and looked steadily into his face. ‘If I was a woman,’ she said slowly and earnestly, ‘I would go with you, even if you would not let me.’

‘How would you manage that?’

‘I would follow you secretly.’

‘You must not say so,’ said Joshua reprovingly; ‘it would be very, very wrong.’

‘To follow any one you loved?’ questioned the child, shaking her head at the same time to denote that she had no doubt whether it would be right or wrong. ‘Wrong to wish to be with any one you loved? It would be wrong not to wish it. But’—and she looked round, as if fearful, although they were alone, lest her resolution should become known—‘nobody should know; I would not tell a living soul.’

Joshua was silent, puzzled at Minnie’s earnestness. Minnie, with the shell at her ear, soon broke the silence, however.

‘Has your friend—the boy you have told me about——’

‘Dan?’

‘Yes, Dan. Has Dan got a shell?’

‘No. I don’t suppose he ever thought of it.’

‘And yet he loves you very much, and a shell is the only thing that can bring the sea to him.’

‘Who gave you the shell, Minnie?’

‘No one.’

‘How did you get it, then?’

‘I took it from a stall.’

‘O, Minnie!’ exclaimed Joshua, grieved and shocked; ‘that was very wicked.’

‘I know it was,’ said Minnie simply; ‘but I did it for you. Two days afterwards, when father had money given to him, I asked him for some, and he gave it me. I went to the stall where the shells were, and asked the man how much each they were. “A penny,” he said. I gave him twopence and ran away. That was good, wasn’t it?’

Joshua shook his head.

‘It was very wicked to steal the shell; and I don’t think you made up for it by paying double when you got the money.’

But Minnie set her teeth close, and said between them, ‘It was wicked at first, but it wasn’t wicked afterwards, was it, shell?’—She listened with a coaxing air to the shell’s reply.—‘The shell says it wasn’t. Besides, I did it for you; Dan wouldn’t have done it.’

‘No, that he wouldn’t.’

‘Shows he doesn’t love you as much as I do,’ muttered Minnie with jealous intonation. ‘If he did, he would have thought of a shell, and would have got it somehow. If he did, he would go with you, and would never, never leave you!’

‘Now, Minnie, listen to me.’

‘I am listening, Joshua.’ She would have taken his hand; but he put it behind his back, and motioned her to be still. She knew by his voice that something unpleasant was coming, and she set her teeth close.

‘You know that it is wrong to steal, and you stole the shell.’

‘I did it for you,’ she said doggedly.

‘That does not make it right, Minnie. I want you to give me a promise.’

‘I will promise you anything but one thing,’ she said.

‘What is that?’

‘Never mind. You would never guess, so you will never ask me. What am I to promise?’

‘That you will never steal anything again.’

‘Do you think I ever stole anything but the shell, then?’ she asked, with an air that would have been stern in its pride if she had not been a child.

It was on the tip of Joshua’s tongue to say, ‘I don’t know what to think;’ but her manner of putting the question gave the answer to it. ‘No,’ he said instead, ‘I don’t think you ever did, Minnie.’

Her head was stubbornly bent; and she had enough to do to keep back her tears. She would not have succeeded had his answer been different.

‘No, I never stole anything else. Stole is the proper word, I know; but it is a nasty one, and makes me ashamed.’

‘That is your punishment, Minnie,’ said Joshua, wondering at himself for his tenaciousness.

‘That is my punishment, then,’ said Minnie not less doggedly than before; ‘but I did it for you—nothing would drive her from that stand-point—‘and I promise you, Joshua, that I will never steal anything again—never, never!’

He gave her his hand, and she took it and caressed it.

‘And now, Minnie, about Dan,’ he said. ‘You must not say or think anything ill of him. He is the best-hearted and the dearest friend in the world; and I cannot tell you how much I love him, or how much he loves me.’

‘Why doesn’t he go to sea with you, then?’

Joshua looked at her reproachfully.

‘Your memory is not good, Minnie. He is lame, as I told you.’

‘I forgot. He can’t go because he is lame. Would he go if his legs were sound?’

‘I think he would.’

‘Don’t think,’ Minnie said, with a sly look at him; ‘be sure.’

‘I am sure he would then.’

‘Caught!’ cried Minnie, clapping her hands, the sly look, in which there was simplicity, changing to a cunning one, in which there was craft. ‘Caught, caught, caught!’

‘I should like to know how,’ said Joshua. ‘How ridiculous of you, Minnie, to cry “Caught!” as if I was a fox!’

‘No, I am the fox,’ she cried, shaking her hair over her face with enchanting grace. ‘I am in

hiding—just peeping round the corner.' She made an opening in her thick hair, and flashed a look at him ; a look that was saucy, and cunning, and charming, and wilful, all at once. 'Am I a good fox ?'

' You are a goose. Tell me how I am caught.'

' Listen, then,' throwing her hair back, and becoming logical. ' Dan loves you as well as any man or woman could love another, you said.'

' Did I say as well ? I thought I said better. I meant better.'

' That's no matter. Dan loves you,—she held up her left hand, and checked off the items on her fingers—' that is one finger. And Dan would go to sea with you ; and it would be right, because he loves you—that is two fingers. But Dan can't go, because he is lame—that is three fingers. Now I love you, and I am not lame—that is four fingers. And it would not be wrong in me to follow you—and that is my thumb, the largest reason of all. So you are caught, caught, caught, you see.'

' I do not see,' said Joshua in a very decided voice. ' Dan is a boy, and you are a girl ; and what is right for a boy to do is often wrong for a girl. I do not see that I am caught.'

But Minnie had relinquished the argument. She was satisfied that she was right.

'And you would really be very angry with me if I did it?' she asked.

'I should be very angry with you now, Minnie, if it were not that you were a stupid little girl, just a trifle too fond of talking nonsense. Such nonsense, too! Why, there's Ellen, Dan's sister, *she* wouldn't talk so.'

All the brightness went out of Minnie's face, and a dark cloud was there instead.

Joshua noticed it with surprise. He took her hand gently; but she snatched it away.

'Ellen would not behave like that,' he said; 'She is too mild and gentle.' (There came into his mind what he had said to Dan of the two girls—that Ellen was like a lake, and Minnie like the sea; and he thought how true it was.) 'It would do you good to know her.'

'I don't want to know her,' said Minnie sullenly, 'and I don't want to be done good to.'

'I didn't think you would be cross-tempered on my last day at home,' said Joshua in a grave and gentle voice. He paused, as if expecting her to speak; but she remained silent. 'Ah, well,'

he said, rising, ‘I shall go and see if I can find your father.’

She jumped up and walked with him to the door.

‘Say that you are not angry with me,’ she said in a voice of the softest pleading, raising her face to his.

He would have made a different reply, but he saw that her face was covered with tears.

‘Angry with you!’ he said kindly. ‘Who could be angry with you for long, little Minnie?’

She smiled gratefully and thoughtfully as he kissed her; and when he had gone, and she had heard his last footstep, she returned to her old place upon the floor, and crouching down, placed the shell to her ear, and listened to the singing of the sea.

CHAPTER X.

GOOD-BYE.

MINNIE'S obliviousness of what was right had never before been presented so clearly to Joshua. He knew well enough that Minnie, although she was aware that it was wrong to steal, could not understand that she did wrong in stealing the shell. At the same time he could not help feeling tenderly towards her because of that wrong action. After all, how much she was to be pitied ! Could it be wondered at that she was hard to teach and that she was wayward and wilful, living such a lonely life as she lived, with no friend to counsel, no mother to guide her ? How quaint was her fancy, and what a pretty thing it was to see her as he saw her in his imaginings—sitting alone in her room, with the shell at her ear, listening to the singing of the sea ! With what a daintily-caressing motion she nestled to him when he called her ‘ Little Minnie ! ’ He repeated the pet words to himself, ‘ Little Minnie, little Minnie ! ’

as he walked along, and smiled. As for her telling him that she would like to go to sea with him, what was it but a childish whimsy? If he had not contradicted her and made a matter of importance of it, she would have said it, and there an end. She would like to go to sea with him, and would follow him if she were a woman: Well! she was but a child, and the wish was as innocent as her declaration that she loved him.

When he had thought out all this, he thought of to-morrow, and looked round upon the familiar streets and the familiar houses with a pang of regret. To-morrow he would be far away from them, and every succeeding day would take him farther and farther away from them and all that he loved. From mother, father, the Old Sailor, his pet birds, and from Dan—ah! dear, dear Dan! Did ever boy or man have such a friend? Then there was Ellen, his dear little sweetheart in the days when they were children together. Was there ever such another unselfish little maid as that? So devoted, so tender, so loving! How quickly she had won the heart of the Old Sailor! He remembered that old salt saying, pointing his great finger at Ellen as he said it, ‘Joshua my lad, that little lass there is the prettiest, the best, the truest, and

the kindest-hearted in these dominions ;' and he remembered himself looking at Ellen's mild face —peaceful as a lake—and saying, ' So she is, sir,' and meaning it heartily ; and he remembered the Old Sailor saying, ' That's right, my lad ; all you've got to do is to mind your bearings.' Although he had answered, ' Yes, sir, I will,' he wondered afterwards, and he found himself wondering now, what on earth the Old Sailor meant by saying, ' Mind your bearings.' But what matter ? Ellen *was* the prettiest, the best, the truest, and the kindest-hearted lass in these or any other dominions. God bless her !

As he thought of these things, he felt himself growing so soft-hearted, that he stopped and stamped his feet upon the pavement, and thumped himself upon the chest, saying as he did so, between laughing and crying, ' This won't do, Josh ; this won't do.'

He had given himself a score of thumps, and had said, ' This won't do, Josh,' half-a-score of times, when loud cries for help fell upon his ears. He had been walking in the direction of the river, through some of the streets where he would be most likely to find Basil Kindred ; and he was in a locality where there was a number of low public-

houses, patronised by the worst class of seamen. Turning in the direction of the cry, Joshua saw a woman run swiftly out of a narrow thoroughfare. Pursuing her was a man, a dark-looking fellow, with glittering eyes, and rings in his ears, and a knife in his hand, and with all his copper-coloured fingers and black serpent locks of hair flashing in the air with evil intent. Impelled by the unmistakable air of terror in the form of the flying girl, and the unmistakable air of mischief in the form of the pursuing man—partly, also, by the impulsion born of the hunting spirit implanted in man and beast—Joshua started off at a great pace, and flew after the flying couple.

It was that part of the day when the neighbourhood was most quiet. All the men were at work in the dockyards, and the few women about (having a wholesome horror probably of a man with an open knife in his hand, and being perhaps accustomed to such diversions) seemed disinclined to take part in the chase. With the exception of one drunken creature, with a blotched and bloated face, who made a frantic motion to follow, but, being tripped up by her draggling petticoats, stumbled, more like a heap of rags than a woman,

into the gutter, where she lay growling indistinctly.

The flying woman and the pursuing man were fleet of foot, but Joshua was younger and more nimble than they. As he gained upon them, a dim consciousness stole upon him that he knew them; and, as he approached nearer, the doubt grew into conviction. The almost breathless woman, throwing affrighted looks behind her, as if a dozen men were pursuing her instead of one, was Susan; and the evil-looking man who was bent on running her down was the Lascar who served the Old Sailor, and who cooked for him, and would have poisoned him for rum and tobacco. Some other than those, the ruling cravings of his existence, influenced him now. All the passions of love and hate, and the desire to achieve his purpose by striking terror, were expressed in every motion of every limb: they were so eloquent and earnest in the savage pursuit that they seemed to proclaim their owner's intention: as he raced after the panting girl.

He was almost upon her, and she felt his ugly lips reeking their detestable flavour of rum and tobacco upon her neck, when Joshua, coming up to him, seized him by the throat. He had been

so savagely vindictive in the pursuit, that Joshua's hand upon his throat was the first indication he received that he was being himself pursued ; but, wasting no look upon his pursuer, he slipped from Joshua like an eel—his neck was redolent of grease—and with an inarticulate cry of rage and baffled lust, he sprang after Susan again, who had gained a few steps by Joshua's ineffectual interposition. But Susan, thoroughly bewildered and terrified, turned into a blind alley, and perceiving that there was no thoroughfare, and that she was trapped, fell upon the rough stones, prostrate from fear and exhaustion.

On one side of the blind alley were four or five houses, in which no signs of life were visible. They seemed stricken to death by disease. On the other side was a black dead wall, which shut out the sky. Before the Lascar could reach Susan—what the man's intention was, or what he would have done in his wild fury, he, being more beast than man, might probably not have been able to explain—Joshua had knocked the knife out of his hand, and had knocked him down with a blow, the force of which astonished Joshua himself, even in the midst of his excitement. Almost before Joshua could realise what had occurred, the cow-

ardly Lascar was crouching by the side of the dead wall, as if his lair were there, and Joshua was on his knee assisting Susan to recover herself; keeping a wary look, however, upon the knife, which was lying in the road at an equal distance from him and the Lascar. The Lascar saw it too—saw it without looking at it and without seeming to see it. A surprising change had taken place in him. A minute since a volcano of delirious lust was raging in his breast, and every nerve in his body was quivering with dangerous passion; now, as if by magic, he was coiled up like a snake, with no motion of life in him but the quiet glitter of his eyes, which watched everything, but seemed to watch nothing.

‘What is it all about, Susan?’ asked Joshua in wonderment, after a pause. But, before Susan could reply, a crawling motion on the part of the Lascar towards the knife caused Joshua to spring into the road. The snake had no chance with the panther. The Lascar was knocked back to his position by the dead wall, and Joshua stood over him grasping the knife. This was the most eventful transaction that had ever occurred to Joshua; and, as he stood over his antagonist palming the knife, a strange sensation of pride

in his own strength tingled through his veins. There was blood upon the Lascar's face ; Joshua had struck him so fiercely as to loosen one of his teeth—so decidedly to loosen it, that the Lascar put his finger into his mouth and drew it out. He said nothing, however, but kept the tooth clasped in his hand.

‘ You black devil !’ exclaimed Joshua, gazing upon the crouching figure with a kind of loathing amazement. ‘ What do you mean by all this ?’

The Lascar wiped the blood from his mouth with his sleeve, and shaking the hair from his eyes, threw upon Joshua a covert look of deadly malice—a look expressive of a bloody-minded craving to have Joshua helpless on the stones beneath him, that he might press the life out of his enemy. His eye spoke, but his tongue uttered no word. Raging inwardly as he was with bad passion, he had sufficient control over himself to suppress any spoken manifestation of it. But his attitude and demeanour were not less dangerous for all that.

‘ He follows me everywhere,’ said Susan, still gasping and panting for breath. ‘ He dogs me by day and by night. He waylays me in the dark, and I can hardly get away from him.’

'What for?' demanded Joshua, with his eye upon the Lascar, who was sitting cunningly quiet nursing his wounded mouth.

'I don't know,' replied Susan, with an appalled look over her shoulder, as if she were haunted by a fear that the spirit of the Lascar was there, notwithstanding that he was crouching before her in the ugly flesh. 'I am afraid to think.'

'Afraid! in broad daylight!'

'Day or night it is all the same,' moaned Susan. 'Whenever he sees me, he dogs me, till I am ready to die. You don't know his power—you don't know his power!'

'What were you doing before I saw you?'

'I was looking for some one.'

'For whom?'

'For Mr. Kindred,' with a curious hesitation.

'For Mr. Kindred!' exclaimed Joshua, more amazed than ever; 'why for him?'

'He is ill. I will tell you about it by and by,' replied Susan nervously. 'I thought I should find him in this neighbourhood, and while I was looking for him, he—pointing to the Lascar with a shudder—'he saw me and spoke to me, and would not leave me—wanted me to go with him and drink with him, and when I refused, he seized

me, and then—then—I scratched him—and—I don't remember anything more, except that I was afraid he wanted to kill me.'

Joshua looked up at the Lascar's face, and observed the scratch for the first time. It was a long scratch downwards from the eye to the wounded mouth. The Lascar made no attempt to hide it, but sat still, with his hand on his mouth.

'Serve you right, you black dog!' exclaimed Joshua. 'What do you mean by dogging her? What do you mean by following her with a knife? Why, you Lascar dog, for two pins——' he raised his hand indignantly, and advanced a step towards the Lascar, who made a shrinking movement backwards, although in truth he could not get nearer to the dead wall than he was already.

'Don't, Joshua, don't!' cried Susan, seizing his arm, and clinging to him imploringly. 'Don't touch him, for God's sake, or'—with another scared look behind her—'he'll haunt you as he haunts me.'

A taunting wicked smile crossed the Lascar's lips, but it was gone a moment afterwards. It might have been the shadow of an evil thought finding expression there.

'How does he haunt you more than you have

already told me he does ?' demanded Joshua in a great heat. ' You don't think he can frighten me as he frightens you, Susan, do you ? The black dog ! Look at him ! He's frightened of a white man's little finger !'

' Hush !' implored Susan. ' He haunts me when he is not near me.'

' How can he do that, you foolish girl ?'

' He does it—he *can* do it—with his Double !'

' His Double ?'

' He has a Double—a spirit, a wicked spirit'—she turned her head slowly and trembled in every limb ; ' and he told me it should haunt me, and follow me wherever I go. And it does ! I feel it behind me when I don't see him. It is there now ! It is there now !' And wrought to the highest pitch of mental terror and excitement, Susan threw up her hands, and would have fallen to the ground but for Joshua's protecting arm.

The taunting smile came again upon the Lascar's lips, as he secretly watched Susan's terror. With a special maliciousness he flashed his fingers towards her, as if he were issuing a command to his Double not to leave her. It was evidence of the power he possessed over her weak mind that, notwithstanding her almost fainting

condition, a stronger shuddering came upon her when he made even that slight motion.

Feeling that, for Susan's sake, it was necessary to put an end to the scene, Joshua, with an indignant motion, commanded the Lascar to leave them. The Lascar rose submissively, like a whipped dog, and so stood with bent head before Joshua.

'Now then, what are you waiting for?' asked Joshua.

'My knife,' answered the Lascar doggedly.

'Not likely,' said Joshua; 'I know you too well to let you have it.'

'What do you know of me?' asked the Lascar in a low guttural voice.

'I have heard enough of you from Mr. Meddler'—the Lascar grated his teeth with tigerish ferocity—'you and the likes of you. I know how free you are with your knives, you Lascars, on land and on sea. Be off!'

'My knife!' again demanded the Lascar, with his eyes directed to Joshua's feet; but he saw Joshua's face and every motion of Joshua's body. 'My knife! It is mine. I bought it and paid for it.'

'Stole it more likely,' said Joshua with a sneer.

'It is a lie. I bought it. Even if I did steal

it, you have no right to it. Give me my knife, and let me go.'

Joshua reflected. Clearly he had no just claim to the man's knife, and had no right to retain it. His mind was soon made up. Releasing his hold of Susan, he placed the blade beneath his foot, and broke it off close to the handle. Then he threw the handle and the blade over the Lascar's head. A dangerous fire gleamed in the man's downcast eyes, and a cold-blooded grating of teeth came from his mouth. He stood silent for a few moments, with his hands tightly pressed, striving to master the devil that was raging within him. But he could not restrain his passion.

'Curse you!' he hissed; 'I owe you something; I will pay it you, by hell!'

He crouched to receive the blow which he expected Joshua would give him, in return for his curse. But no blow was given nor intended; yet he quivered as if he had been struck before he spoke again.

'See you!' he cried; 'I never forget—never—never! My turn will come. You called me black devil—'

'So you are,' said Joshua scornfully.

‘And black dog—dog of a Lascar !’

‘So you are.’

‘You shall pay for it ! If it is years before I can pay you, you shall be paid for it ! See you—remember !’ With all his fingers flashing menacingly, as if each was possessed with a distinct will, and was swearing vengeance against Joshua. ‘Your life shall pay for it—more than your life shall pay for it !’ He spat upon the ground and trod savagely upon the spittle. ‘I mark you—see !’ With his forefinger he marked a cross in the air. ‘I put this cross against you—curse you !’

Susan, gazing on with sight terror-fixed, saw the infuriated man stamp upon the stones, as if he had Joshua’s life-blood beneath his foot, and then saw the cross marked in the air. The fire of her fevered imagination gave red colour to the shadowy lines ; and when the Lascar lowered his forefinger, she saw the recorded cross standing unsupported in the air—a cross of bright red blood. Fascinated, she gazed until the bright colour faded into two dusky lines, and so remained. Joshua laughed lightly at the vindictive action and the curse ; yet he did not feel quite at his ease.

‘Come, Susan,’ he said, ‘let us be going.’

But Susan did not move. Every sense was absorbed in watching the dreadful cross and the Lascar’s passion-distorted face. He, stooping to pick up the handle of the knife and the broken blade, turned again upon Joshua, and remained faithful to his theme.

‘Don’t forget,’ he said in his low bad voice, the words coming slowly from a throat almost choked with passion. ‘By this’—placing his hand upon his wounded mouth—‘and these’—holding up the pieces of the knife—‘I will keep you in mind. If it is to-morrow, or next week, or next month, you shall be paid! The dog of a Lascar never forgets! See you—remember!’

‘Storm away,’ said Joshua, drawing Susan aside to allow the Lascar to pass. ‘You will have to be very quick about it, for to-morrow I go to sea.’

‘You do, eh!’ exclaimed the Lascar, with another harsh grating of his teeth, and stopping suddenly in his course. ‘See you now—take this with you for my good-bye!’ With a swift motion, he cut his finger with the broken blade, and shook the blood at Joshua. It fell in a sprinkle over his clothes, and a drop plashed into his face.

The Lascar saw it, and laughed. ‘Take that with you for luck !’ he cried. ‘By that mark I shall live to pay you, and you will live to be paid !’

So saying, he turned and fled. Joshua sprang after him, but the man was out of sight in a minute. Returning to Susan, Joshua found her sitting upon the pavement, nursing her knees and sobbing distressfully.

‘O Josh !’ she cried, ‘it is a bad omen.’

‘Not at all,’ said Joshua, cooling down a little, and wiping the spot of blood from his face. ‘What does the old proverb say ? “Curses always come home to roost.” Do you hear me ?’

It was evident that she did not : her fright was still strong upon her. With a shrinking movement of her head, she looked slowly round, and clutching Joshua’s hand, whispered, ‘For pity’s sake, don’t let him come near me ! Hold me tight ! Keep close to me ! He is not gone !’

With a firm and gentle force, Joshua compelled her to stand upright.

‘There is no one here but you and I,’ he said, in a firm voice. ‘You are letting your fancies make a baby of you. There is no one here but you and I. If you will not believe what I say—I can see, I suppose, and I am calm, while

you are in a regular fever—if you will not believe what I say, I shall leave you.'

'No, no!' she cried, clinging to him.

He compelled her to walk two or three times up and down the court. His decided action calmed her. She gave vent to a sigh of relief, and wiped her eyes.

'That's right,' said Joshua as they walked out of the court. 'Now I can tell you that I am glad I have met you. I join my ship to-morrow.'

'I had no idea you were going away so soon.'

'I am going now to see if Mr. Kindred is at home.'

'I live in the same house as he does,' she said, looking timidly at Joshua.

'That is strange. Are you and he intimate?'

'Yes. They are poor, you know, Joshua.'

'So are you, Susey.'

'But I can help them a little. He's often ill, and Minnie isn't strong enough to take care of him, and so I nurse him sometimes. Minnie and I are great friends.'

When they arrived at Basil Kindred's poor lodging, Minnie met them at the door. With her finger to her lips, she motioned them to be quiet.

'Tread softly,' she whispered; 'father has come home, and is lying down.'

They walked to the bed, and saw Basil Kindred lying on the bed in unquiet sleep. Susan placed her hand on his hot forehead, and said,

'I have been afraid of this for a long time, Josh. He has got a fever. What would he do without me now?'

There was a touch of pride in her voice as she asked the question. The pride arose from the conviction that the man she loved really needed her help, and from the knowledge that she could make some little sacrifice for him.

'He is very, very ill, I think,' whispered Minnie.

'We will make him well between us, Minnie,' said Susan.

All the fears by which she was assailed but a few minutes since were gone. Joshua was glad to see that, at all events.

Minnie took Susan's hand gratefully, and kissed it.

'She has been so good to us, Joshua,' she said.

Susan's eyes kindled, and she directed to Joshua a look which said, 'Have I not done right

in coming to live here? See how useful I can be, and how happy I am !'

'I shall tell them at home where you live, Susey,' said Joshua.

'Very well. Give my love to Dan.'

Joshua nodded, and bent over Basil Kindred. The action disturbed the sleeping man. He seized Joshua's wrist in his burning hand, and said, in a trembling voice, 'She died in my arms, and the earth was her bed. The stars were ashamed to look upon her. Well they might be! Well they might be!'

'He is speaking of his wife,' said Susan softly to Joshua. 'He loved her very dearly, and would have died for her. When she died, his heart almost broke.'

Sympathy and devotion made her voice like sweet music. Joshua looked at her with a feeling of wonder, and was amazed at the change that had come over her. An hour ago, she was crouching in drivelling terror, overpowered by absurd fancies; now she moved about cheerfully, strong in her purpose of love. But he had never in all his life seen her as he saw her now. He bade her good-bye, and she wished him God speed, and kissed him. Minnie accompanied him to the door.

‘Good-bye, dear little Minnie,’ he said.

‘Good-bye,’ she said, with tears in her voice.

‘You forgive me, don’t you, for what I said this afternoon?’

‘Yes, my dear.’

‘Ah! I like to hear you speak like that; it sounds sweet and good. Say, “I forgive you, little Minnie.”’

‘But I haven’t anything to forgive, now I come to think of it.’

‘Yes, you have. You say that out of your good nature. You mustn’t go away and leave me to think that you are angry with me.’

‘I am not angry with you, Minnie. After all, what you did, you did through love, and there could not be much wrong in it.’

The brightest of bright expressions stole into her face, and she clasped her hands with joy.

‘Say that again, Joshua, word for word, as you said it just now.’

‘What you did, you did through love,’ repeated Joshua to please her, ‘and there could not be much wrong in it.’

‘O Joshua,’ she cried, pressing her hands to her face, ‘you have made me almost quite happy. I have heard father say the same thing, but in

different words. Now I *shall* follow you to sea. Yes, I shall, with this'—holding up her shell. 'To-morrow night, and every night that you are at sea, I shall listen to my shell and think of you.'

'Stupid little Minnie,' he said affectionately.

'And you will come back in a year?'

'I hope so, please God.'

'Then I shall be growing quite a woman,' she said thoughtfully.

The next moment she raised her face quickly to his. The tears were streaming down it. As he bent to her, she caught him round the neck, and kissed him once, twice, thrice, with more than the passionate affection, but with all the innocence, of a child. Then she ran into the house; and Joshua, taking that as a farewell, walked slowly homewards, to go through the hardest trial of all.

That hardest trial through which he had to go awaited him at home. All the members of the Marvel family, and Dan and Ellen Taylor, were assembled together in the old familiar kitchen. They were all of them sad at heart, and made themselves sadder by vain little attempts to be cheerful. The tea was a very silent affair, and

the two or three extra delicacies provided by Mrs. Marvel—as if it were a feast they were sitting down to—were failures. The most remarkable feature about the tea was the pretence they all made to eat and drink a great deal, and the miserableness of the result. They pretended to accomplish prodigies, and handed about the bread-and-butter and the cake very industriously, as if it were each person's duty to be mightily anxious about every other person's appetite, and to utterly ignore his own. But everything in the way of eating and drinking was a mistake. The bread-and-butter was disregarded, and was taken away in disgrace ; the cake was slighted, and retired in dudgeon. It was a relief when the tea-things were cleared. Mrs. Marvel was the bravest of the party ; she who had so strongly protested against Joshua's going to sea, did all she could to administer little crumbs of comfort to every one of them, and especially to her husband, who had so heartily encouraged Joshua not to do as his father had done before him, but who was now the most outwardly miserable person in the kitchen. Thus, Mrs. Marvel sang snatches of songs, and bustled about as if she really enjoyed Joshua's going, and was glad to get rid of him. When

she had accomplished a good deal of Nothing, she rose and did Nothing else ; and when that was done, she sat down and remonstrated with her good man, and would even have rejoiced if she could have worried him into blowing her up.

‘Don’t take on so, George,’ she said ; ‘you ought to be cheerful to-night of all nights. What is the use of fretting ? Joshua’s going to make a man of himself, and to do good for all of us—ain’t you, my dear ?’

‘I intend it, mother, you may be sure.’

‘Of course you do ; and here is father in the dumps when he ought to be up in the skies.’

‘Some day, I hope,’ said George Marvel, mustering up spirit to have his joke in the midst of his sadness ; ‘not just now, though. I want to see what sort of a figure Josh will cut in the world first. Give me my pipe, Maggie.’

Mrs. Marvel made a great fuss in getting the pipe, knocking down a chair, and clattering things about, and humming a verse of her favourite song, ‘Bread-and-Cheese and Kisses ;’ and really made matters a little less sad by her bustle. Then, instead of handing her husband the pipe without moving from her seat, as she might have done, she made a sweep round the table, and pinched

Ellen's cheek, and patted Dan on the head, and wiped her eyes on the sly, and kissed Joshua, and so worked her way to George Marvel, and put the pipe between his lips.

' You are as active as a girl, Maggie,' said George Marvel, putting his arm round her waist, and gently detaining her by his side.

She looked down into his eyes, and for the life of her could not help the tears gathering in her own. She made no farther attempts to be cheerful ; and what little conversation was indulged in occurred between long intervals of silence. They had an early supper ; for Joshua was to rise at daybreak. When supper was over, George Marvel took out the Bible, and in an impressive voice read from it the cvii. Psalm. They all stood round the table with bent heads, Joshua standing between his mother and Dan, clasping a hand of each. Very solemn was George Marvel's voice when he came to the 23d verse :

' They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ;

These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.

For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths ; their soul is melted because of trouble.

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.'

When the reading of the Psalm was over, and they had stood silent for a little while, they raised their heads, but could scarcely see each other for the tears in their eyes. Then they kissed, and said good-night; and Joshua, casting a wistful glance round the kitchen, every piece of furniture and crockery in which appeared to share in the general regret, assisted Dan up to his bedroom for the last time.

They had scarcely time to sit down before the handle was gently turned, and George Marvel entered. In the room were all Joshua's little household gods — his accordion, his favourite books, and his dear little feathered friends.

George Marvel threw his arm round Joshua's waist, and drew him close.

'What are you going to do with the birds, Josh?' he asked.

'Dan will take care of them, father.'

‘Don’t fret at leaving them—or us. Be a man, Josh—be a man,’ he said, with the tears running down his face.

‘Yes, dear father, I will,’ said Joshua with a great sob.

‘And don’t forget father and mother, my boy.’

‘No, father, never !’

‘It’s better than being a wood-turner, Josh. Don’t you think so ?’ doubting at the last moment the wisdom of his having encouraged Joshua in the step he was about to take.

‘A great deal better, father. You’ll see !’

‘That’s right, Josh—that’s right ! I’m glad to hear you say so. Good-night, my boy. God bless you !’ And pressing Joshua in his arms, and kissing him, George Marvel went away to bed.

He had not been gone two minutes before the handle of the door was turned again, and Mrs. Marvel’s pale face appeared. She did not enter the room ; and Joshua ran to her. She drew him on to the narrow landing, and shut the door, so that they were in darkness. She pressed him to her bosom, and kissed him many times, and cried over him quietly.

‘O mother,’ whispered Joshua, ‘shall I go ? Shall I go ?’

'Hush, dear child,' Mrs. Marvel said. 'It is the very best thing; and you must not doubt now. Bless you, my dear, dear child! You will come home a man; and we shall all be so proud of you—so proud—and happy!' She pressed him closer, and tried to speak cheerfully; but it was a poor attempt. 'And write whenever you can, and tell us everything.'

'Yes; I will be sure.'

'Be a good boy, Joshua.'

'Yes, mother.'

'And you will say your prayers every night?'

'I will, mother.'

'Dear child, God will protect you. I shall think of you of a night saying your prayers, my dear, and it will comfort me so! And here I am, keeping my boy out of bed, like a selfish, selfish, selfish mother! Now, my dear, one more kiss, and say good-night.'

He kissed her again, and she left his arms, and crept softly to her room. These heart-shocks were hard to bear, and he paused to recover himself before he reentered the room. Dan did not look at him, nor ask him any questions. But Joshua sat down beside Dan, and said,

'It was mother kept me, Dan.'

'Yes, I know, Jo dear. There's somebody else at the door.'

It was Sarah, who asked if she might come in. Of course she might. And might Ellen come in? Of course. So Ellen came in, and she and Sarah sat with their brothers for a few minutes. They talked quietly together, and Joshua drew close to Ellen, and grew calmer as he looked at her sweet peaceful face. She raised her eyes shyly to his, and told him she had a little present for him, and would he accept it? *There* was a question to ask him! Joshua answered almost gaily. She produced her present—a poor little purse, which she had herself worked for him—and Joshua kissed it, and kissed her afterwards, and she nestled to his side very tenderly and very prettily, and cast down her eyes, and was perfectly happy. The girls did not stay long. Good-night was said again and again, and Joshua asked Ellen to kiss him, and she did so without hesitation. When they were gone, Joshua sat down, and rested his head upon his hands. He was weary after the day's excitement, but although he was tired, he was wakeful, and did not feel inclined for sleep. So he and Dan had a long chat together, recalling the many tender memories that enriched their friendship.

'I have a present for you, too, Jo,' said Dan, producing a Bible.

Joshua opened it, and read on the first page, 'From Dan, to his dearest friend and brother, Joshua. With undying love and confidence.'

'With undying love and confidence,' mused Joshua. 'Nothing could ever change our friendship, Dan, could it?'

'Nothing, Jo.'

'Come, now,' said Joshua, 'suppose, for the sake of argument, that I was to turn out bad.'

Dan smiled. 'That couldn't happen, Jo.'

Thereupon Joshua told Dan the adventure he had had that day with Susan and the Lascar. 'And, do you know, Dan, that when I knocked him down, and saw his mouth bleeding, I was glad—savagely glad, I am sorry to say. Yet afterwards when I thought of it, and when I think of it now, it seems as if it was a bad feeling that possessed me.'

'It doesn't seem so to me, Jo; it gives me greater confidence in you. If you had not acted so, what would have become of poor Susan?'

'That's true,' said Joshua.

'I knew all along, Jo dear, that you were loving and tender and good, but I did not know

until now that you were so bold and brave. And so strong too! I am proud of you. You can't tell what may happen. Think of this strange new world you are going to now, Jo, and of the strange things the Old Sailor has told us of it. You have no more idea of the wonders you will see than I have. But you will see them, and I shall see them through you. Listen now to me, Jo. I love you, my dearest friend and brother, and you have my undying love and confidence. I, a poor helpless cripple, had no future of my own; and you have given me one. I live in you. I shall follow you in my thoughts, in my dreams. Somehow, Jo, our minds have grown together, and I smile at your words that you might turn out bad. Could you believe it of me, if I was strong like you even?

‘No.’

‘You answer for me, Jo. You have always been noble and good to me, and you will always be the same. I would not think of thanking you, Jo, for what you have done for me—I would not think of thanking you for making my poor crippled legs a blessing to me instead of a burden. Not with words do I or can I repay you—but with undying love and confidence. Kiss me now, Jo, and say that

you fully understand my friendship and my truth.'

'Fully, Dan ;' kissing him. 'And I have never forgotten what I promised you a long time ago, Dan. Wherever I am, and whatever I shall see, I will think, "Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him." Although we are parted, we shall be together.'

'Yes, in spirit, Jo dear,' said Dan, with a beautiful light of happiness upon his face. 'And now, good-night.'

'Good-night, Dan.'

'If I am asleep in the morning, Jo, do not wake me. I am content to part from you now with this good-night.'

'Very well, Dan. Good-night.'

'Good-night, MY FRIEND.'

With that Dan turned to the wall, and Joshua, going to the bird-cages hanging in the room, said good-night to the birds. They were asleep on their perches, and he did not disturb them. 'They will give me a chirrup in the morning,' he thought, and, blowing out the candle, he said his prayers and went to bed. But he could not sleep; the events of the day presented themselves to his mind in the strangest forms. Minnie and her

shell came and faded away, and her place was filled by Susan nursing Basil Kindred ; then came the ugly figure of the Lascar crouching down, and afterwards making a cross against him and cursing him ; his father reading the Psalm, while they all stood round ; he and his mother standing in the dark passage, and his mother sobbing over him ; Ellen kissing him and nestling close to him, O, so prettily and innocently ! All these pictures presented themselves to him consecutively at first ; but presently they grew disturbed, and the Lascar, the evil genius of the group, was mischievously and triumphantly at work, now in one shape, now in another. Joshua and Ellen were sitting together when the Lascar came between them, and struck Ellen out of the picture. Then the two were locked in a deadly struggle on the ground, and the Lascar, overpowering him, knelt upon his chest and hissed, ‘ I could take your life, but that won’t satisfy me. More than your life shall pay for what you have done.’ Other phases of his fancies were, that Dan believed him to be false. ‘ My doing !’ hissed the Lascar. That Ellen believed him to be wicked. ‘ My doing !’ hissed the Lascar. That they all believed him to be bad. ‘ My doing !’ hissed the Lascar.

That they were all grouped together, and were turning from him, and that the Lascar, holding him fast, whispered that that was his revenge. At length the combinations became so distressing, that Joshua, to shake off the fancies, rose in his bed and opened his eyes. The moonlight was streaming in through the window, and Joshua crept quietly to the water-jug and sprinkled some water over his face. Then, his mind being calmer, he knelt down by the side of the bed ; and Dan, who had not slept, raised himself upon his elbow, and, seeing his friend in prayerful attitude, smiled softly to himself and was glad.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT OCCURRED AFTER JOSHUA'S DEPARTURE.

THE nicest mathematical calculations of the probability of events are not uncommonly subjected to shocks which, to those dull and unreflective persons who cannot distinguish between rule and exception, seem to give the lie to science. Yesterday the world was at peace, and rulers and politicians were eloquent in phrases of friendship and good-will to the inhabitants of every nation on the face of the earth. To-day the world is at war, and rulers and politicians, hot with wrath at a cunningly-provoked insult, are eager to avenge traditional wrongs at any expense of blood and human suffering, and to resent what they chose to call national humiliation. Yesterday two nations clasped hands, and smiled upon one another. Suddenly, as thus they stood, a fire—kindled by the worst of secret passions and by the lust of self-aggrandisement—flashed into their palms, and they threw each other off, and drew

the sword. A more serious shock was never given to the calculation of the probable course of events. Yesterday peace was certain, and men were preparing to gather the harvest ; to-day war is raging, and the corn-fields are steeped in blood.

So have I seen in a far-off country—now almost in its infancy, but whose growth is swift, and whose manhood will be grand—a sluggish river rolling lazily to the sea. Walking inland along its banks, now broadened by fair plains, now narrowed by towering ranges, I have come suddenly upon the confluence of it and another river, whose waters, springing from cloud-tipped mountains of snow, rush laughingly down the grand old rocks. Here, in the narrow pass where the rivers meet, the gray sluggish stream of a sleeper opposes itself to the marvellously blue waters of a passionate life. One, dull and inert, rolls like a soulless sluggard sullenly to the sea ; the other, with its snow-fringed lines reflected in its restless depths of blue, leaps and laughs as it flashes onwards, like a godlike hero, to the mightier waters of the Pacific. But a few hundred yards away from the confluence of the streams, no stranger, walking thitherward, could imagine the singular and grand contest that is eternally waging in that wonderful

pass ; and when he comes upon it suddenly, admiration impels him to stand in silent worship.

One of the commonest of common similes is the simile of life and a river. But as it is not because a thing is rare that it must needs be sweet, so it is not because a thing is common that it must needs be true. Every river fulfils its mission : does every life ? More like a stream than a river is life. Trace the stream, from the inconsiderable bubbling of a mountain spring, down the hill-sides, over rocks, through glades lighted by sunlight and moonlight, through tortuous defiles and rocky chasms, into a sparkling current, which swells and swells and grows into a lovely channel, or into a sullen rill, which drips and drips and loses itself in a puddle.

When Joshua's ship had sailed, gloom fell upon the house of the Marvels ; the sunshine that used to warm it no longer shone on it. George Marvel showed his grief more plainly than did his good woman. He was more gentle towards her, and sometimes his gentleness of manner took the form of submission. Singularly enough, she was seriously distressed at the change. She wished him to be positive and contradictory, as he used to be ; to scold her and put her down, as he used

to do ; to be more masterful and less gentle. She strove in all sorts of ways to bring back his old humour ; she tried his temper by opposing him in trivial matters ; she contradicted him when he spoke ; and she even ventured, on two or three occasions, to tell him that he would have to wait for his meals—which waiting for one's meals, as is well known, is one of the leading causes of domestic differences. But all her well-meant efforts were thrown away ; and when she saw him sit down patiently on being told, with assumed snappishness, that tea wouldn't be ready for half an hour, she gave it up as a bad job, and, acting wisely, left time to cure him. It *did* cure him, as it cures greater griefs ; but in the mean time he suffered greatly.

The fact of it was, George Marvel was troubled in his mind at the prominent part he had taken in influencing Joshua's choice of a profession. Having driven his son to sea, he felt as if he had a hand in every storm, and as if he were in some measure responsible for every gust of wind, inasmuch as it expressed danger to Joshua. Then the thought of Joshua's being shipwrecked haunted him. ‘ Suppose Josh is shipwrecked, father,’ his wife had said, ‘ what would you say then ? You'd lie awake night after night, father

—you know you would—and wish he had been a wood-turner.'

' Maggie was right,' he admitted to himself; ' it would have been better for Josh, and happier for all of us, if he had remained at home and been a wood-turner.'

Being in pursuit of misery, he showed the doggedness of his nature by hunting for it assiduously. He read with remorseful eagerness every scrap of print relating to shipwreck that he could lay hands upon. He would go out of his way to borrow a paper which he had heard contained an account of disasters at sea, and when he obtained it, he would shut himself up, and read it and re-read it in secrecy, until he extracted as much misery from it as it could possibly yield him. The second Saturday night after Joshua's departure he saw a number of persons assembled round a sailor who was begging. The sailor had a patch over his eye and a wooden leg, and he was singing, in a voice of dismal enjoyment, a woful narration of his sufferings on a raft. George Marvel stopped until the song was finished, and then gave the man a penny. The following Saturday night he went in search of the sailor, and listened to his song, and gave him

another penny. And so, for many successive Saturday nights, he went and enjoyed his penny-worth of misery, getting, it must be admitted, full value for his money.

On other evenings he smoked his pipe in the kitchen as usual. If the weather was boisterous, he would go restlessly to the street-door, and look at the sky and up and down the street, and come back more low-spirited than ever.

‘It’s dreadfully windy to-night, Maggie,’ he would say.

‘Do you think so, George?’ Mrs. Marvel would ask, making light of the wind for his sake, although she too was thinking of Joshua.

‘Not a star to be seen,’ he would add despondently.

Then would come a stronger gust, perhaps, and George Marvel would shiver, and ask his wife if she thought it was stormy out at sea. She, becoming on the instant wonderfully weatherwise, would answer, No, she was sure it wasn’t stormy at sea, for the sea was such a long way off, and it wasn’t likely that a storm would be all over the world at once.

One night when a great storm was raging through London, and when the thunder was break-

ing loudly over the chimney-tops in Stepney, Mrs. Marvel lay awake, with all a mother's fears tugging at her heart-strings, praying silently for Joshua's safety, and clasping her hands more tightly in her agony of love at every lightning-flash that darted past the window. She hoped that her husband was asleep, oblivious of the storm; but he was as wide awake as she was, and was following Joshua's ship through the fearful storm. At one time, the house shook in the wild blustering of the wind, and they heard a crash as of the blowing down of some chimneys.

'Maggie,' whispered Mr. Marvel, wondering if his wife were awake.

'Yes, father,' answered Mrs. Marvel, under her breath.

'It is an awful storm.' Then, after a pause, 'Have you been awake long, mother?'

'I have been listening to it for ever so long, dear,' said Mrs. Marvel; adding, with a cunning attempt to comfort him, 'And praying that it might spend out all its force over our heads, and not travel away to Joshua's ship. We ought to be thankful that Joshua is on the open sea. Mr. Meddler says there's no danger for a ship in a storm when it isn't near land.'

‘And he knows better than us, mother.’

‘Yes, dear. All we can do is to pray for Joshua. God will bring him back to us, father.’

‘I hope so; I pray so. Good-night, Maggie. Go to sleep.’

‘Yes, George. Good-night.’

But they lay awake for a long time after that, until the storm, sobbing like a child worn out with passion, sighed and moaned itself away.

As for Dan, for many days after Joshua was gone he felt as if a dear friend had died; not Joshua, but some unknown friend almost as dear. He had reason enough for feeling lonely and miserable. His dear friend’s companionship had been inestimably precious to him; Joshua’s very footfall had made his heart glad. The hours they had spent together were the summer of his life, and now that he and Joshua were parted he recognised that a great void had been made in his life, and that it behoved him to fill it up. That void was want of occupation. What was he to do now that Joshua was gone? When Joshua was at home, there had been every day something to do, something to talk about, something to argue upon. Then, time did not hang heavily upon his hands; now, when there was no Joshua to look

forward to, he found himself falling into a state of listlessness which he knew was not good for him. He wanted something for his hands to do. What? He thought a great deal about it, and had not settled the difficulty when a domestic calamity occurred.

The drinking proclivities of Mr. Taylor have been incidentally referred to. These proclivities had unfortunately grown upon him to such an extent, that he was now an ardent and faithful slave of that demon to so many English homes among the poor—Gin. It has been spoken of often enough and truthfully enough, God knows! But it cannot, until it lie vanquished in the dust, be too often struck at. If there is a curse in this our mighty England which degrades it to a level so low that it is shame to think of, that curse is Gin! If vice, domestic misery, and prostitution have an English teacher, that teacher is Gin! And in this England, which we so glorify, so sing about and mouth about, no direct attempt has ever yet been made by Statesmen who work as Jobbers to root this teacher out of our wretched courts and alleys, and replace it by something better. Perhaps one day, when a lull takes place in the Jangle of Politics—amid the din of which

so many strange sounds are heard ; such as the wrangle of religious creeds, whose various exponents split worthless straws in Church-and-State bills for heaven knows what purpose, unless it be for the triumph of their particular creeds; such as the wrangle of private members whose hearts and souls (literally) are wrapt up in private bills for the good of the people—perhaps one day amid the lull, a wise and beneficent statesman may turn his attention to the abominable curse, and earn for himself a statue, the design of which shall be—after the manner of St. George and the Dragon—Gin writhing on the ground in all its true deformity, pierced through by the spear of a wise legislation, which in this instance at least shall have legislated for the good of the many.

Mr. Taylor, one of the Gin Patriots, having enrolled himself as a soldier in the cause, was necessitated by the magnanimity of his nature to become a soldier leal and true. So he bowed himself down before Gin, and worshipped it morning, noon, and night. Even in his dreams he was faithful to the cause, mumbling out entreaties to his god. His devotion causing him to neglect all lesser worldly matters, he fell into a bad state of poverty, and his family fell with him. The worst

form of Mr. Taylor's devotion did not appear until Joshua left home ; hitherto he had been working up to his ambition's height. Having reached it, he rested on his oars, which, being composed of the frailest of timber, gave way and sent him rolling into the mud. As he declined to provide for his family, that duty devolved upon Mrs. Taylor, and she patiently and unmurmuringly performed her duty, and worked her fingers to the bone, until her strength gave way. She was one of those quiet souls who always do their best, and never complain ; and having done her best, she closed her eyes upon the world, and passed without a murmur out of the hive of busy bees.

There was much sadness in the house when the event occurred, and there was much helpful sympathy among the neighbours. Not for Mr. Taylor—although they remembered the time when he was a respectable member of society, before he had fallen under the fatal influence of Gin—but for the children. During Mrs. Taylor's illness, which lasted but a very short time, Susan came to the house and helped Ellen in her household work and in nursing their mother. It was an anxious time for the poor little maid ; but she did her work willingly, and with the patient spirit her mo-

ther had exhibited. Susan was a great help to her, and there was more sisterly love between them during that time than had ever before shown itself. At the funeral, Mr. Taylor presented himself in as decent a state of Gin as he could muster up for the occasion ; drivelled a little, trembled a great deal, and proclaimed himself a most unfortunate man. Finding that he obtained no sympathy for his miserable position from his children or from the neighbours, he, when the funeral was over, pawned his waistcoat, and dissolving the proceeds, wept tears of Gin over the death of his wife. While he was employed in that process of drowning his grief, the three children were sitting together in Dan's room, talking in hushed tones over their loss and over their prospects. After the funeral, Mrs. Marvel—who had helped to nurse Mrs. Taylor—quietly prepared tea in Dan's room, and with her usual sympathetic instinct of what was best, kept herself out of sight as much as possible. But at the last moment, when tea was ready and she was about to leave the children undisturbed, she placed her arm round Dan's neck, and whispered that Joshua's home was Dan's, and that he might come and occupy Joshua's room whenever he pleased.

'And be another son to us, my dear,' said good Mrs. Marvel; 'so that we shall have two.' Dan thanked her, and looked at Ellen thoughtfully, and then Mrs. Marvel left the children to their meal.

Said Dan, 'Mrs. Marvel has asked me to live in her house, and sleep in Joshua's room.'

'It would be a good thing,' observed Susan.

Dan stole his hand into Ellen's, who had been looking down sadly; she felt the warm pressure, and her fingers tightened upon his. That little action was as good as words; they understood each other perfectly.

'No,' he said, 'it would not be a good thing. It was a good thing for Mrs. Marvel to offer, but then she is Jo's mother, and as kind and good as Jo is; but it would not be a good thing for me to accept. For there's Ellen here; she is half of me, Susey, and we mustn't be parted. But, indeed there will be no reason for it. I have a wonderful scheme in my head, but it wants thinking over before I tell it.'

Dan spoke bravely, as if he were a strong man, with all the world to choose from.

'O Dan,' exclaimed Susan, tears coming to her eyes at his brave confident manner, 'if it

hadn't been for me you wouldn't have been a cripple, and your poor legs might have been of some use to you.'

'They will be of more use to me perhaps than if they were sound, Susey,' said Dan cheerfully, 'if I can make something out of the scheme I have got in my head—and I think I can. Let us talk sensibly. Now that poor dear mother's gone, we must all do something. I intend to commence doing something to-morrow.'

'What, dear Dan?' asked Susan.

'You will see. What I should like is that we should all live together. Perhaps not just now, Susey, but by and by. What do you say to that, Susey?'

Susan thought of Basil and Minnie Kindred, and felt that it would be impossible for her to leave them. 'It would be very good,' she said, 'but we can talk of that by and by, as you say.'

'Very well. The first thing, then, we have to consider is bread-and-butter. Bread-and-butter,' he repeated, in reply to their questioning looks. 'We must have it, and we must earn it.'

Susan nodded gravely, and said, 'Ellen had better learn to be a dressmaker.'

Ellen looked up with joyful gratitude.

'O, how good of you, Susey!' she exclaimed.
'Then I could earn money. I wouldn't mind how hard I should have to work.'

'It is a capital idea,' said Dan, taking Susan's hand. 'The best thing you can do, Susey, is to bring some of your work here every day for a couple of hours, and let Ellen help you—she will soon learn.'

'That I will,' said Ellen in a voice of quiet gladness.

These young people, you see, were not entirely unhappy.

'I wonder where Joshua is?' remarked Ellen during the evening.

'Ah, where?' sighed Dan. 'But wherever he is, he is doing his duty, and we will do ours. How happy we all were that night at Mr. Meddler's! What a beautiful day that was! Like a dream! Hark! There is the church-bell striking nine o'clock.' They listened in silence. 'That is like a wedding-bell. Now the other church is striking —how solemn it sounds!—like a funeral bell.'

The tears came to their eyes when Dan inadvertently made the last remark.

They did not speak for a long time after that, and then Dan said,

‘ I feel now just as I felt the day after Jo went away.’

They sat up talking until eleven o’clock. They spoke in low tones, and they sat in the dark.

‘ Don’t you miss mother’s step, Dan ?’ asked Susan.

‘ How strange it is to know that she is not in the house !’ said Dan. ‘ Hush !’

There was a step outside the door ; it was the drunken step of their father, who stumbled through the passage and up the stairs, shedding tears of Gin as he staggered to bed, bemoaning the death of his wife. They listened with feelings of grief and fear until they heard his bedroom-door shut, and then turned to each other with deeper sighs. Shame for the living was more grievous to bear than sorrow for the dead.

CHAPTER XII.

DAN ENTERS INTO BUSINESS.

THEIR plans were commenced the very next day. Susan came round with her work, and gave Ellen her first lesson in dressmaking. Ellen was as skilful with the needle as Susan was, and made famous progress. A cheerful worker is sure to turn out a skilful one.

‘I have been thinking in the night, Ellen,’ said Susan, ‘that we might go into partnership.’

‘Wait,’ said Dan the Just, looking up from the table, on which the birds were going through their performances; ‘there is time enough to talk of that. I don’t intend that you shall sacrifice everything for us.’

‘No sacrifice could be too great for me to make for you, Dan,’ replied Susan. ‘But I think that I should have all the advantage, if we were partners. Ellen has such a beautiful figure, that she would be sure to get customers. Stand up, dear —look at her, Dan!’ And Susan turned Ellen about, and looked at her pretty sister’s pretty

figure without a tittle of envy. ‘If you are a judge of anything but birds, Dan, you must confess that Ellen is a model.’

Dan smiled, and said, ‘If Ellen wasn’t good, you would make her vain. Let the partnership question rest for a little while. Go on with your work, and don’t talk. I’ve got something very particular to do.’

Dan, with his birds before him, appeared to be perplexed with some more than usually difficult problem concerning them. There was a curious indecision also in his treatment of them. Now he issued a command, now he countermanded it; now he ordered a movement, and before it was executed threw the birds into confusion by giving the signal for something entirely different. Until at length the birds, especially the old stagers, stood looking irresolutely at each other, with the possible thought in their minds (if they have any) that their master had taken a drop too much to drink; and one young recruit—none but a young one and a tomtit, who is notoriously the sauciest of birds, would have dared to do it—advanced, alone and unsupported, to the edge of the table, and looking up in Dan’s face, asked what he meant by it. Recalled to himself by this act of insubor-

dination, Dan recovered his usual self-possession, and selected two bullfinches, somewhat similar to those which he had given to the Old Sailor. They were young untrained birds, and Dan at once commenced their education. But Ellen remarked with surprise that he was less tender in his manner towards them than towards the other birds. He spoke to them more sternly, and as if the business in which they were engaged was a serious business, with not a particle of nonsense in it.

‘See, Ellen,’ he said after some days had passed—‘see how clever they are! They draw up their own food and their own water; and directly I sound this whistle, they sing “God save the King.”’

He blew through the tin whistle, and the birds sang the air through.

‘Now you sound the whistle, Ellen.’

Ellen blew through the whistle, and the birds repeated the air:

‘So you see, Ellen, it doesn’t matter who blows the whistle; the birds begin to sing directly they hear it. Here is another whistle—a wooden one, with a different note. Blow that softly.’

Ellen blew, and the bullfinches immediately set to work hauling up water from the well.

'That is good, isn't it?' said Dan. 'They will obey anybody.'

'But tell me, Dan, why you don't speak to them as kindly as you do to the others?'

'Ah, you have noticed it, miss, have you? I thought you did. Well, then, in the first place, I wanted to teach them by a new system. I wanted to teach them so that anybody can make them do what I do, if he gives the proper signal; and I have succeeded, as you see. If I had taught them by my voice, as I have taught the others, they wouldn't have been of use to any one but me. They are such cunning little things, and they have such delicate little ears! In the second place, Ellen, I did not want to grow fond of them.'

'Why, Dan dear?'

'Because, if I had grown fond of them, it would almost break my heart to part with them. Who could help loving them, I wonder? They have been my world, you see, and they are such innocent little pets. I have grown to love them so, you can't tell. And we know each other's voices, and have made a language of our own, which no one else can understand.'

He chirruped to them, and called to them in endearing tones; and all the birds, with the ex-

ception of the pair of bullfinches, fluttered to him, and perched about his shoulders and nestled in his breast. The two little bullfinches, standing alone in the centre of the table, looked more surprised than forlorn at the desertion.

Then Dan said : ‘ This is part of my scheme. I commence business to-day as a bird-merchant. I have trained these two bullfinches to sell. You are earning money already, Ellen dear, and you are a girl. I am not quite a man in years, although I think I am here’—touching his forehead —‘ and I am not going to let you beat me at money-making.’

He pulled out a paper, on which was written, in Roman letters and neat round hand,

THIS PAIR OF BULLFINCHES
FOR SALE.

They draw up their own Food and Water ; and they sing

‘ GOD SAVE THE KING,’

And other Tunes, to the Sound of a Whistle.

Inquire within of DAN TAYLOR.

‘ What I propose to do, Ellen, is to put the cage with the bullfinches in the parlour-window, with this announcement over the cage. Perhaps

it will attract the attention of some one or other, and he will be curious about it, and will come in and make inquiries.'

So the birds were exhibited in the parlour-window, and above their cage was hung the announcement that they were for sale. The neighbours saw the birds, and there was not a woman for a quarter of a mile around who did not make a pilgrimage to the parlour-window of the Taylors. 'Dan is selling his birds,' they said, 'because of his brute of a father;' and they shook their heads sorrowfully, and admired Dan's writing, and said he was quite a scholar. Ellen, working in the parlour, would pause in the midst of her hemming, or stitching, or basting, as the shadow of a passer-by darkened the window, and pray that he would come in and buy the birds.

The exhibition was a great boon to the dirty little boys and girls in the neighbourhood, who at first stood in open-mouthed admiration, and would have stood so for hours, neglectful of the gutters, if an occasional raid against their forces by anxious mothers had not scattered them now and then. Those of the children who could get near enough would flatten their noses and mouths against the window-panes in the fervour of their enthusiasm.

The bullfinches, looking down from their perch upon the queerly-distorted features, had the advantage of studying human nature from an entirely novel point of view, and were doubtless interested in the study. For the purpose of attracting the passers-by, Dan, at certain intervals during the day, caused the birds to draw up their water and food ; and those exhibitions were the admiration of the entire neighbourhood.

‘ I wish some one would come in and ask the price of them,’ sighed Ellen, wishing that she had a fairy wand to turn the sight-gazers into customers.

Dan only smiled, and bade Ellen have patience.

In the mean time Mr. Taylor, becoming every day more devoted in his worship to his god, fell every day into a worse and worse condition. One evening, Ellen, being tired, went to bed soon after tea, and on that evening Mr. Taylor happened to come home earlier than usual. There was a reason for it : he had spent all his money, had quite exhausted his credit, and had been turned out of the public-houses. Being less drunk than usual, he was more ill-tempered than usual, and he stumbled into the parlour with the intention of venting his ill-humour upon Ellen. But Ellen was **not**

there. Dan was the only occupant of the room, and he was reading. He raised his eyes, and seeing his father half-drunk, he lowered them to his book again. He was ashamed and grieved.

‘Where is Ellen?’ demanded Mr. Taylor.

‘Gone to bed,’ replied Dan shortly.

‘Why isn’t she here to get my supper?’ asked the Gin-worshipper irritably. Dan made no reply; but although he appeared to be continuing his reading, a quivering of his lips denoted that his attention was not wholly given to his book. ‘Do you hear me?’ continued Mr. Taylor after a pause, thumping his fist upon the table. ‘Why isn’t she here to get my supper? What business has she to go to bed without getting my supper?’

‘She was up at five this morning to do the washing, and has been working all day.’

Dan spoke very quietly, and did not look at his father.

‘Her mother wouldn’t have done it,’ whimpered Mr. Taylor. ‘Here am I without twopence in my pocket, and my very children rebel against me. Is there anything in the house for supper?—tell me that.’

‘I don’t know. I don’t think there is.’

‘You don’t know! You don’t think there is!

sneered Mr. Taylor. ‘ You’ve had yours, I suppose ? ’

‘ No, sir, I have not had any.’

‘ What do you mean by “ sir ” ? ’ cried Mr. Taylor furiously. ‘ How dare you call your father “ sir ” ? Is that what you learnt from your friend Joshua ? ’

Dan clasped his hands nervously together ; he was agitated and indignant, and he did not dare to give expression to his thoughts.

‘ Why don’t you speak ? ’ demanded Mr. Taylor with unreasoning anger. ‘ What do you mean by sitting there mocking your father ? ’

‘ I am not mocking you,’ said Dan. ‘ And as for speaking, I am too much ashamed to say what I think ; so I had better remain silent.’

‘ How dare you speak to me in that way ! Haven’t I kept you for years in idleness and luxury ? Haven’t I provided for you ? And now when I am in bad luck, and haven’t sixpence to get a quartern loaf’ —he meant a quartern of gin, but the loaf was the more dignified way of putting it —‘ my children turn against me.’

‘ It isn’t my fault that you have had to keep me,’ Dan said quietly. ‘ If I had been like other boys, I should have been glad to work and earn

money; but I am crippled, and never felt that I was unfortunate until now. I don't think mother would have thrown my misfortune in my teeth as you have done.'

Mr. Taylor was too much steeped in gin to feel the reproachful words. He continued to bemoan his hard fate and the ingratitude of his children. In the midst of his bemoaning he caught sight of an empty cage. An inspiration fell upon him. That bird-cage could probably be exchanged for a pint of gin. Present bliss was before him, and the prospect of it made him cunning. He ordered Dan to bed, and Dan, who could crawl with the aid of his crutches, went, thankful to escape from so painful an interview. When Dan came down the next morning he discovered his loss. He was much grieved; not so much at the loss of the bird-cage, but at the thought that his other cages and the birds might be appropriated in like manner. He said nothing of what had occurred, but that night when he went to bed he had all his birds and cages removed to his bedroom, and he locked his door.

It was midnight when Mr. Taylor came home. Although he was drunk, he crept like a thief into the house. The proceeds of the cage had supplied

him with drink for the day ; and having conscientiously spent every penny, he was in the same impoverished condition as he had been the previous night. As he could not live without gin, he determined to appropriate another bird-cage. What right had Dan to them ? They were his, the father's, who had kept his son in idleness, and who had clothed and sheltered him. Yet in the midst of his drunken muttering he was oppressed with a shame-faced consciousness of the villainy of his logic, and it was with difficulty he obtained a light from the tinder-box. The poor little rushlight flickered when it was lighted, as if it also were oppressed with shame. Unsteadily, and with much stumbling, Mr. Taylor groped his way to Dan's room. Looking around on the walls he discovered, to his dismay and astonishment, that the birds and the cages were gone. His first surprise over, he gave way to passion. The boy had no doubt taken the cages to his bedroom for fear his father should steal them. How dared Dan suspect him ? He would teach Dan a lesson—a lesson that he would not forget. Working himself into a state of maudlin indignation, he stumbled up the stairs to Dan's bedroom, and tried the door. It was locked. Here was another proof of his son's

ingratitude and want of confidence. What was he to do for gin the next day? He must have gin; he could not live without it. Ellen's bedroom was next to Dan's. The drunken father turned the handle of the door, and looked in. On the floor were Ellen's boots. He saw gin marked on them, and catching them up, he clutched them to his breast, and slunk guiltily to bed.

Ellen, rising the next morning, looked about in vain for her boots. She searched for them upstairs and downstairs, wondering what had become of them. The door of her father's room was open, and she entered it; but Mr. Taylor, knowing that Ellen was an early riser, had taken care to get out of the house before she was about. When Ellen saw the empty bed, some glimmering of the truth flashed upon her. At first the poor girl sat down upon the bed and began to cry; the loss of her boots was a grievous loss indeed to her. She had no money to buy another pair with; they were such beautiful boots, too, and fitted her so nicely! What was she to do? How it would grieve Dan to know! That thought calmed her. Dan must not know—it would hurt him too much. She might be able to get an old pair from somebody during the day; perhaps Susan had an old

pair to lend her. She dried her eyes and washed them well with cold water, and altogether managed so successfully, that breakfast was over, and she and Dan and the birds were all together in the parlour, without Dan ever suspecting what had occurred.

Those two children sitting there were fully aware that a grave crisis was approaching. Young as they were to bear the weight of serious trouble, they bore it cheerfully, and strove in their humble way to fight with the world and with the hard circumstances of their lives. Dan, cripple as he was, had much hope; and often, when he was thinking over certain schemes which had been suggested by the stern necessity of his condition, a quaint smile would play upon his lips, and a humorous light would shine in his eyes. Ellen, looking up from her work, would sometimes see that smile, which, for all its quaintness, had a shade of thoughtfulness in it; and on her lips, too, a pleasant smile would wreath in sympathy. They were very tender towards each other; their love made them strong.

Ellen, busy with her needle, sat close to the table, so that Dan should not catch a glimpse of her shoeless feet. Dan was industriously at work

training two birds, which were to replace those in the window when they were sold.

The education of this second pair of birds was almost completed, and Dan said as much to Ellen. He had taught them different tricks, and had fitted two ladders in the cage, up and down which they hopped, keeping time, step for step.

‘But will they ever be sold?’ exclaimed Ellen almost despairingly.

‘*It is* a long time before we make a commencement,’ said Dan. ‘There’s Susan.’

When Susan entered, she examined the dress which Ellen was making, and suddenly exclaimed,

‘Why, Ellen, where are your boots?’

Dan looked up quickly, and then directed his eyes to Ellen’s feet. Poor Ellen stammered a good deal, and striving to hide the truth from Dan, got into a sad bewilderment of words.

‘Nay, but, Ellen,’ interposed Dan in a grave voice, ‘you don’t mean to say that you have been sitting all the morning without your boots?’

‘Yes, I have,’ said Ellen, compelled to confess.

‘But why, my dear?’

‘When I got up this morning, I looked for them, and could not find them. Perhaps I can

find them now.' And Ellen ran out of the room; but she soon returned, shaking her head, and saying, 'No, they're gone. Never mind; it can't be helped.'

'You really don't know what has become of them?'

'No, Dan.'

'Did you see father last night?'

Ellen shook her head.

'Nor this morning?'

Ellen shook her head again.

'I can't quite see what is to be the end of all this,' said Dan sadly. 'It is almost too dreadful to think of. Father must have taken your boots, Ellen dear. The night before last he took a bird-cage; that was the reason I had all my birds in my bedroom last night. It is very, very dreadful. Poor dear mother! Poor dear Joshua! I do wish you were here now to advise us what to do!'

And the three children drew closer together, and strove to comfort each other.

'Dry your eyes, Ellen,' said Dan stoutly; 'brighter days will come. Susan, have you a pair of old boots that you can lend to Ellen?'

Susan ran out of the house and returned with

a pair of boots which she had bought at a second-hand clothes-shop, and which Ellen was very thankful for, although they were much too large for her.

Mr. Taylor came home at midnight in a state of drunken delirium. He had drunk deeply—so deeply, that when he slammed the street-door behind him, he found himself in the midst of a thousand mocking eyes, growing upon him and blasting him with their hideous looks ; and as he groped his way in terror up the dark stairs, a thousand misshapen hands strove to bar his progress. They fastened on him and clung to him ; and the faster his trembling hands beat them down and tore them away, the more thickly they multiplied. So, fighting and suffering and groaning in his agony, the drunkard staggered to his room, and Dan and Ellen shuddered as they lay and listened. Well for them that they could not see as well as hear ; well for them that they could not see him pick the crawling things (existing only in his imagination) off his bedclothes and throw them off with loathing ; that they could not see him, bathed in perspiration, writhing in his bed and fighting with his punishment. He could not endure it. It was too hor-

rible to bear. The room was full of creeping shapes, visible in the midst of the darkness. He would go out into the streets, into the light, where they could not follow him. Where was the door? He felt about the walls for it. It was gone ; he was closed in, imprisoned with his terrors. He beat about with his hands deliriously. The window ! ah, they had not closed that ! He dashed at the panes, and tearing open the casement with his bleeding fingers, fell from a height of twenty feet and met a drunkard's death.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAN DECLARES THAT IT IS LIKE A ROMANCE.

THE old gentleman with the hour-glass who never sleeps does not look a day older, and yet four seasons have played their parts and have passed away. The white hairs in George Marvel's head are multiplying fast, and he grumbles at them as usual, but has given up the task of pulling them out. Great changes have taken place among Joshua's friends ; and Dan, looking up from his work, remarks sometimes that it is almost like a romance. Judge if it is.

When Mr. Taylor was buried — when the shame of his death was forgotten and only sorrow for it remained—the children found themselves in one of those social difficulties from which many wiser persons than they are unable to extricate themselves. For the first three or four weeks after their father's death, Mrs. Marvel and Susan had between them managed to defray the small expenses of the house ; but the tax was heavy—

too heavy for them to continue to bear. One day, however, unexpected help came. George Marvel, in his quiet way, had conceived a great idea, and in his quiet way had carried it out. Here were these two children thrown upon the world. Not children exactly perhaps, for they were nearly seventeen years of age ; but one was a cripple, and the other was a girl. They had been good children, and their character stood high in the neighbourhood. Who ought to assist them ? The neighbours. Some one must take it in hand, and why not he as well as any other person ? No sooner had he made up his mind than he set to work. He went round to the neighbours personally, and told them what his errand was. Poor as they were, they gave their mites cheerfully, with scarcely an exception. When he had made the round of the neighbours, he went to the workshops, and the men there gave their penny each, and the boys their halfpence, and so swelled the total. His own employers and fellow-workmen were more liberal than any. He did not forget his tradesmen, his butcher and baker and grocer. They all gave ; and the result was that, at the end of the three weeks during which he had been employed in his self-imposed task, he had a sum

of not less than twelve pounds four shillings in his possession, to hand over to Dan and Ellen to assist them through their trouble. The night he made up his accounts, he told his wife what he had done, and she blessed him for it, and was silently and devoutly grateful that Providence had given her a husband with such a heart.

The following evening George Marvel visited the children, with his bag of money in his coat-tail pocket. Ellen was at work, and although she looked pale in her black dress, she looked very pretty. The goodness of the heart always shows itself in the face.

Now Dan had been thinking all day, and indeed for many previous days, that he ought to consult some mature person as to what he was to do. You must understand that Dan, notwithstanding that he was so much younger than Susan, considered himself the head of the family. He had his plans, but he wanted advice concerning them. Up to the present time, his business in trained birds had not flourished. It could not be said to have commenced, for he had not sold a bird. He had decided that Mr. Marvel would be a proper person to ask advice of, and by good luck here Mr. Marvel was.

‘Have you a few minutes to spare, sir?’

‘Yes, surely, Dan,’ replied Mr. Marvel.

‘I want to take your advice, sir,’ commenced Dan after a slight hesitation. ‘You know how we are situated, and how suddenly our misfortunes have come upon us. Well, sir, we must live; we must have bread-and-butter. Now the only scapegrace out of the lot of us is me——don’t interrupt me, Ellen, nor you, sir, please. Susan is earning her bread-and-butter and something more. Ellen is earning enough to keep her; and I am the only idle one of all of us, and I am the only one who is eating bread-and-butter and is not earning it.’

‘But, Dan——’ interposed George Marvel.

‘No, sir, please; let me go on. I have been eating the bread of idleness all my life, and I am eating it now. It isn’t right that I should do so. I ought to earn my own living. But how? I am not like other boys, and cannot do what other boys can do. One thing is certain: I can’t let Ellen work for me, and it would break my heart to part from her; and she would feel it quite as much as I should.—Yes, Ellen, keep your arm round my neck, but don’t speak.—I tried to earn money, you know that. I trained some birds, and put

them in the window, thinking that some one would buy them. But no one has. I haven't earned a penny-piece, and every bit of bread I put into my mouth has been paid for by Susan and Ellen.'

Notwithstanding his eagerness, his tears choked him here, and he was compelled to pause before he resumed. In the mean time, obedient to his wish, neither Ellen nor Mr. Marvel spoke.

' Now, sir, this is my idea. I have got now twenty-two birds; they can do all sorts of tricks: they can whistle tunes; they can climb up ladders; some of them can march like soldiers and can let off guns; some of them can draw carts. Would it be considered begging if I, a lame boy, who have no other way of getting bread-and-butter, made an exhibition of these birds, and got some one to wheel me about the streets, and stop now and then so that I might put the birds through their tricks? I shouldn't be ashamed to accept what kind persons might give me, or might drop into a little box which I would take care to have handy. I wouldn't do it in this neighbourhood. I would go a long way off—three or four miles perhaps—into the rich parts of London, where people could better afford to give. But would it be considered

begging? That is what I want to ask your advice upon, sir.'

George Marvel's breath was completely taken away. The enthusiastic manner in which Dan had spoken, no less than his admiration of the proposed scheme, had caused him to forget his errand for the time. 'Wait a minute,' he said somewhat excitedly, 'I must think; I must walk about a bit.' But no sooner had he risen than the weight of the money in his coat-tail pocket brought him to his sober senses, and he sat down again.

'Dan,' he said, taking the lad's hand affectionately in his, 'you are a good boy, and I am glad that you are Joshua's friend. I will answer your question and give you my advice, as you ask it. In any other case than yours I think it would be begging; but I don't think it *would* be in yours.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Dan gratefully.

'Mind, I think even in your case it would not be exactly what I should approve of, if you had any other way of getting a living.'

'You think as I do, sir; but I have tried, as you see, and I have not succeeded.'

'Try a little longer, Dan.'

'How about next week's rent, sir?'

‘ You can pay it,’ replied George Marvel, ‘ and many more weeks’ besides. I have a present for you in my pocket ;’ and he pulled out the bag of money and put it on the table. ‘ In this bag is twelve pounds four shillings, which your friends —yours and your sisters’—have clubbed together for you, and that is what brought me here tonight.’

‘ O sir !’ cried Dan, covering his face with his hands.

‘ This money has been got together because all of us round about here love you. I sha’n’t give it to you all at once. You shall have it so much every week ; and I should advise you—as you ask for my advice—to continue training birds for sale and putting them in your window. Try a little while longer. A customer may come at any minute. And one customer is sure to bring another.’

‘ How can I thank you and all the good people, sir ?’ said Dan, with a full heart.

‘ Never mind that now,’ said George Marvel.

If he had known that it would have been so difficult and painful a task, it is not unlikely he would have remitted it to his wife to accomplish. Pretending to be in a great hurry, he rose to go,

and, pressing Dan's hand and kissing Ellen, went home to his wife and told her of Dan's wonderful idea.

Ellen and Dan were very happy the next morning, and set about their work cheerfully and hopefully. Dan wrote a new announcement concerning the birds, and the windows were cleaned, and presented a regular holiday appearance. In the midst of his work, Dan, looking up, saw a face at the window that he recognised. It was that of a young man who had been in the habit of looking in at the window nearly every day for the last week, and of whom Dan had observed more than once that he looked like a customer.

'There he is again, Ellen,' said Dan; 'the same man. Why doesn't he come in and ask the price of them?'

He had no sooner spoken the words than the man's face disappeared from the window, and a knock came at the street-door.

'Run and open the door, Ellen. I shouldn't wonder if he has made up his mind at last.' Dan's heart beat loud with excitement. 'How much shall I ask for them?' he thought. 'O, if he buys a couple of them, how happy I shall be!'

The parlour-door opened, and the man en-

tered ; decidedly good-looking, dark, with a fresh colour in his face, and with black hair curling naturally. The first impression was favourable, and Dan nodded approvingly to himself. The man had curiously flat feet, which, when he walked, seemed to do all the work without any assistance from his legs ; and although his eyes were keen and bright, they did not look long at one object, but shifted restlessly, as if seeking a hiding-place where they could retire from public gaze.

‘ I have been attracted by the birds in the window,’ he said, coming at once to the point, much to Dan’s satisfaction. ‘ Can they really perform what the paper says ? Can they really sing “ God save the King,” and draw up their own food and water ?’

‘ They can do all that, sir ; but you shall see for yourself.—Ellen ! Where is Ellen ?’ Dan called ; for he wanted her to assist him, and she had not followed the stranger into the room.

‘ Ah, Ellen,’ said the stranger, dwelling on the name. ‘ Is that the young lady who opened the door for me ?’

‘ Yes, sir.—Ellen !’ Dan called again.

‘ Allow me,’ said the stranger ; and he went to the door, and called in tones which slipped from

his throat as if it were oiled, ‘Ellen ! Ellen !’ Then he turned to Dan, and questioned : ‘Your sister ?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Ah,’ said the man greasily, ‘she is extremely like you. Allow me. I will bring the cage to the table.’

He brought the cage from the window, and placed it before Dan. At that moment Ellen entered the room. The man’s eyes wandered all over her as she took her seat at the table. She did not return his gaze, but bent her head modestly to her work.

‘Your sister’s name is Ellen,’ he said ; ‘and yours ?’

‘Daniel,’ said Dan ; ‘Daniel Taylor.’

‘Daniel ; a scriptural name. Mine is also a scriptural name : Solomon. Solomon Fewster. Solomon was a wise man ; I hope I take after him.’

‘I hope so, I am sure, sir,’ said Dan somewhat impatiently ; for he was anxious to get to business. ‘Now, sir, if you will please to look and listen.’

He blew through the tin whistle ; and the bull-finches piped ‘God save the King.’

‘Very pretty, very pretty,’ said Solomon Fewster, nodding his head to the music. ‘And you taught them yourself?’

‘Yes, sir. But it isn’t as if they will only sing for me ; they will sing for you, or for Ellen, or any one who blows the whistle.’

‘And they will sing for Ellen if she breathes into the whistle?’ said Solomon Fewster. ‘Will Ellen breathe into the whistle with her pretty red lips? Allow me.’

He took the whistle from Dan and handed it to Ellen ; and she reluctantly gave the signal to the birds, who willingly obeyed it. Mr. Fewster took the whistle from her and blew ; and the birds for the third time piped the air. Then Dan directed his attention to the wooden whistle, and to the wonders performed by the birds at its dictation. Nothing would please Mr. Fewster but that Ellen should place the wooden whistle between her ‘pretty red lips,’ as he called them again, and ‘breathe into it.’ He said that ‘breathe’ was more appropriate to Ellen’s pretty lips than ‘blow.’ He, using the whistle after her, cast upon her such admiring looks, that he really made her uncomfortable. The performance being over, Dan gazed at Mr. Fewster with undisguised anxiety.

He had intended to be very cunning, and to appear as if he did not care whether he sold the birds or not; but the effort was unsuccessful.

‘Well, well,’ said Mr. Fewster; ‘and they are really for sale? Poor little things! I asked the price of bullfinches yesterday at a bird-fancier’s, and the man offered to sell them for fourpence each. Not that these are not worth a little more. There is the trouble of training them; of course that is worth a trifle. Still bullfinches are bullfinches all the world over; and bullfinches, I believe, are very plentiful just now—quite a glut of them in the market.’ He paused, to allow this information to settle in Dan’s mind, before he asked, ‘Now what do you want a-pair for these?’

‘What do you think they are worth, sir?’ asked Dan, much depressed by Mr. Fewster’s mode of bargaining.

‘No, no, Daniel Taylor,’ said Mr. Fewster, in a bantering tone, ‘I am too old a bird for that; not to be caught. Remember my namesake. You couldn’t have caught him, you know; even the Queen of Sheba couldn’t catch *him*. I can’t be buyer and seller too. Put your price upon the birds; and I will tell you if they suit me.’

‘You see, sir,’ said Dan frankly, ‘you puzzle

me. The training of these birds has taken me a long time. You would be surprised if you knew how patient I have to be with them. And you puzzle me when you make so light a thing of my teaching, and when you tell me that bullfinches are a glut in the market. If the bullfinches you can get in the market will suit you, sir, why do you not buy them ?'

'Well put, Daniel, well put,' said Mr. Fewster good-humouredly. 'Still, you *must* fix a price on them, you know. How much shall we say ?'

'Fifteen shillings the pair,' said Dan boldly.

Mr. Fewster gave a long whistle, and threw himself into an attitude of surprise. Dan shifted in his seat uneasily.

'A long price,' said Mr. Fewster, when he had recovered himself; 'a very long price.'

'I couldn't take less, sir,' said Dan.

'Not ten shillings? Couldn't you take ten shillings?' suggested Mr. Fewster, throwing his head on one side insinuatingly.

There was something almost imploring in the expression on Dan's face as he said,

'No, sir, I don't think I could. You haven't any idea what a time they have taken me to train. I hoped to get more for them.'

'I tell you what,' said Mr. Fewster, with sudden animation, 'Ellen shall decide with her pretty red lips. What do you say, Ellen? Shall I give fifteen shillings for them?'

'They are worth it, I am sure, sir,' said Ellen timidly.

'That settles it,' said Mr. Fewster gallantly. 'Here is the money.'

And laying the money on the table, Mr. Fewster took the cage, and shaking hands with Dan, and pressing Ellen's fingers tenderly, bade them good-morning.

Dan's delight may be imagined. It was intensified a few days afterwards, when Mr. Fewster called again, and bought another pair of birds; Mr. Fewster at the same time informed Dan that it was likely he might become a constant customer; and so he proved to be.

• In the course of a short time, Dan found himself in receipt of a regular income. Other customers came, but Dan could not supply them all, as Mr. Fewster bought the birds almost as soon as they were trained. Very soon Dan thought himself justified in making a proposal to Susan. The proposal was that they should all live together in the house where Dan carried on his business.

The only obstacle to the carrying out of the arrangement was Susan's determination not to leave Basil and Minnie Kindred. But why should not Basil Kindred and his daughter come as well? asked Dan; there was plenty of room for them, and it would be such company. And after the lapse of a little time, the result that Dan wished for was accomplished, and Basil and Minnie and Susan were living with them. They were a very happy family. The parlour-window had been altered to allow more space for the bird-cages; and Dan, looking around sometimes upon the group of happy faces, would remark that it was almost like a romance.

And so indeed it was, notwithstanding that the scene was laid in the humblest of humble localities.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STRANGE COURSES OF LOVE.

PERHAPS one of the most absurd questions that could be put to a person would be to ask him how old he was when he was born. Yet the little old-men's faces possessed by some babies might furnish an excuse for such a question. The shrewd look, the cunning twinkle, the pinched nose, the peaked chin, the very wrinkles—you see them all, though the child be but a few weeks old. All the signs of worldly cunning and worldly wisdom are there, ready made, unbought by worldly experience; and as you look at them and wonder how old the little child-man really is, the object of your curiosity returns your look with scarcely less speculation in his eye than you have in yours. You are conscious that you are no match, except in physical strength, for the little fellow lying in his mother's lap or sprawling in his cradle; and a curious compound of pity and humiliation afflicts you in consequence.

Some such a child as this was Solomon Fewster before he attained to the dignity of boyhood ; his parents and their friends agreed in declaring that he was a cunning little fellow, a knowing little fellow ; they would poke their fingers in the fat creases of his neck, and would sportively say, ‘ O, you cunning little rogue ! ’ ‘ You knowing little rogue ! ’ and he would crow and laugh, and endeavour to utter the words after them. He was so accustomed to the phrase, and grew to be so fond of it, that when he was old enough to understand its meaning, his chief desire seemed to be to prove himself worthy of it. It falls to the lot of but very few of us to compass our desires. Solomon Fewster was one of the fortunate exceptions. He was dubbed a cunning little rogue before he knew what such praise meant ; and (could it be that he was unwilling to trade under false pretences ?) when he did know, he educated himself to deserve it, and succeeded. A small percentage of the old-men babies retain their old-men’s looks as they grow to boyhood ; specimens of these can be seen any day in our courts and alleys. This was not the case with Solomon Fewster ; as he grew, the old-man’s look faded from his face, and the spirit of ‘ a cunning little rogue’ took root in

his heart, and flourished there. His parents dying when he was a child, he was left to the charge of a bachelor uncle, an undertaker by trade, who adopted and educated him. When he was taken from school—where he was the cunningest boy of them all—he was initiated into the mysteries of the undertakering business ; and when he was of age he was intrusted with a responsible position, and his uncle made a will, leaving everything to him. He proved himself an invaluable ally ; was grieved to the heart at the losses sustained by his uncle's customers ; wept when he assisted at measurements ; was broken-hearted when the clay was taken from the house ; and sobbed with an almost utter prostration of spirit when he received the account, and signed Payment in Full. He entered heart and soul into the business, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Whether it was because he looked upon himself as the future master of the establishment, or because it was congenial to his nature, he strove by every means in his power to extend the connection ; and being as acute and sensible as a man of double his age, his efforts were successful and the business flourished. Death was most obliging to him, and waited and fawned upon him at every step he

took. If his spirits became depressed because trade was slack, a fortunate epidemic restored him to his usual cheerfulness, and orders poured in ; and it is no disparagement of him, as an undertaker, to state that he buried his friends and acquaintances with melancholy satisfaction. When he was twenty-three years of age his uncle died. He paid the old gentleman every possible mark of respect : had the coffin lined with white satin ; wept till his face was puffed ; entered the expense of the funeral in the ledger to the debit of the deceased, and wiped off the amount at once as a bad debt. Then he set to work vigorously upon his own account. He had his name painted over the door, and issued circulars to every house for miles round. In those circulars he announced that he undertook and conducted funerals cheaper than any other undertaker in London ; said that one trial would prove the fact ; and respectfully solicited the patronage of his friends and the public. His appeal was successful ; his trade increased ; and Solomon Fewster was generally spoken of as a man on the high-road to prosperity.

When Solomon Fewster first saw Ellen, she was seventeen years of age, and he was seized with a sudden admiration for her pretty face and grace-

ful figure. He had never seen a girl so winsome ; and when they met again, he followed her admirably to her home, and saw the exhibition of the bullfinches in Dan's window. Here was an opportunity to stare at her ; and he enjoyed the cheap pleasure again and again until Dan noticed his face at the window. Then a happy thought entered Mr. Fewster's mind. The birds certainly were wonderfully intelligent, and their clever tricks would most likely render them easy of disposal. He entered into communication with a West-end fashionable bird-fancier—the farther away from Dan the better, he thought—and the bird-fancier (who had a connection among fine ladies) informed him that if the birds could really do all that he stated, a profitable trade might be established between them. ‘What a fine opportunity,’ thought Solomon Fewster, ‘of introducing myself to the pretty girl in the light of a benefactor !’ Then came the first interview and the first purchase. The pair of bullfinches he bought for fifteen shillings he sold for thirty ; and the following week the fashionable bird-fancier asked for more. Thus it was that Solomon Fewster made his growing passion for Ellen a means of putting money in his purse ; and thus it was that

he came to be looked upon as a privileged visitor to the house.

The Old Sailor also found his way to the house. He was not as frequent a visitor as Mr. Fewster, but he was a more welcome one. The Old Sailor might have been a child, his heart was so green ; and he had such a fund of stories to tell, and he told them with such simplicity and enthusiasm, believing in them thoroughly, however wild they were, that his hearers would hang upon his words, and laugh with him and sorrow with him, according to the nature of his narrative. They spent the pleasantest of pleasant evenings together, and when Praiseworthy Meddler told his sea-stories, Minnie would sit very quiet on the floor—a favourite fashion of hers—listening eagerly to every word that dropped from his lips. Then Basil Kindred would read Shakespeare when he could be coaxed into the humour, and would keep them spell-bound by his eloquence. He had ceased wandering in the streets and begging for his living. Necessity was his master there. He was stricken down with rheumatic fever, which so prostrated him that he was unable to pursue his vagrant career. They had a very hard task in inducing him to remain with them.

‘Live upon you, my dear lad !’ he exclaimed loftily. ‘No ; I will perish first !’

‘There is enough for all, sir,’ replied Dan. ‘Do not go. I would take from you—indeed, indeed I would!—could we change places. And there is Minnie, sir,—with such a wistful tender glance towards Minnie, who was growing very beautiful,—‘what would she do? But not for her nor for you do I ask this, sir. It is for me ; for Ellen and Susan and Joshua. How happy he will be to find you here when he returns ! You and Minnie, that he talked of so often, and with such affection ! Then think, sir. You would not like to be the means of breaking up our little happy circle ; and it *is* happy, isn’t it, Minnie ?’

‘Ah, yes, Dan !’ replied Minnie, with an anxious look at her father. ‘Only one is wanting to make it perfect.’

‘And that one is Joshua,’ said Dan, divining whom she meant, and grateful to her for the thought.

‘And that one is Joshua,’ she repeated softly, placing her shell to his ear. ‘Do you hear it ? Is it not sweet, the singing of the sea ?’

But all argument and entreaty would have been

thrown away upon Basil if it had not been for Minnie. It was she who, when they were alone, prevailed upon him to stay.

‘Your mother suffered for me and died for me,’ he said to her, as he lay upon his bed of pain. ‘How like her you are growing, Minnie! Well, well, one is enough. I will stay, child, for your sake.’

And she kissed him and thanked him, and whispered that he had made her happy.

The next day she told Dan in a whisper that father was not going away; and Dan clapped his hands, and quietly said, ‘Bravo!’

‘And Joshua used to speak about us?’ she remarked, with assumed carelessness.

‘Often and often, Minnie,’ answered Dan.

‘And really speak of us affectionately?’

‘Ah! if you had only heard him! You know what a voice he has—like music.’

A sudden flush in her face, a rapid beating at her heart, a rush of tears to her eyes. None of which did Dan notice, for her eyes were towards the ground. A little while afterwards she was singing about the house, as blithe as a bird. Dan, stopping in the midst of his work, listened to the soft rustle of her dress in the passage, and to her

soft singing as she went up the stairs; and a grateful look stole into his eyes.

'Not to hear that!' he said. 'Ah, it would be worse than death! But she is going to stay, birdie,' nodding gaily to one of his pets; 'she is going to stay!'

Dan told Minnie of the pretty fancies he had in connection with his friend; of the manner in which his love had grown, until it was welded in his heart for ever and ever; of Joshua's care and self-devotion towards him, the poor useless cripple. He told her of his fancy about the dream theory, and how he had believed in it, and of the experiments he had made. And Minnie listened with delight, and sympathised with Dan—ay, and shed tears with him—and showed in every word she uttered how thoroughly she understood his feelings.

'I have dreamt of him over and over again,' said Dan; 'but of course I don't know, and indeed I can't believe, that I have dreamt of him as he is. He is a man by this time, Minnie; and—let me see!—he is standing on his ship, with his bright eyes and handsome face—'

'Yes!' interrupted Minnie eagerly.

'Made brighter and handsomer by living on

the open sea and away from narrow streets. I can see the spray dashing up into his eyes, and he shaking it off, laughing the while.'

' Yes, yes !' said Minnie enthusiastically.

' You can see him too, Minnie. I feel that you can. Is he not handsome and brave ? I can hear him say, as he looks round upon the grand sea and up at the beautiful clouds,—I can hear him say, " Dan is here with me, although I cannot see him." He has me in his heart, as I have him. It was a compact. We were to be always together, and we are. Dear Jo !' He paused awhile, and Minnie, her hands clasped in her lap, gazed before her, and saw the picture painted by Dan's words. Many such conversations they had, and the theme was always the same.

Shortly after the death of Mr. Taylor the Old Sailor came to see the children. He did not know of the loss they had sustained; and when he heard that both father and mother were dead, he was much grieved. The news so disconcerted him that he rose to go three or four times, and each time sat down again, as if he had something on his mind he wished to get rid of first. As a proof that he was mentally disturbed, he dabbed his face more frequently than usual with his blue-

cotton pocket-handkerchief, folding it up carefully before he put it in the breast of his shirt, as if he were folding up his secret in it, and afterwards taking it out and unfolding it, as if he had made up his mind at last to disclose what that secret was. When he found courage to speak, Dan learnt that the bullfinches which Joshua and he had presented to the Old Sailor were dead.

‘Died yesterday morning, my lad,’ said the Old Sailor; ‘died just as we were beginning to understand each other. Sailor birds they were, and they could climb ropes as well as any bird in the service.’

‘I am sorry they are dead, sir,’ said Dan; ‘but I can give you another pair.’

‘No, Dan, no. I’ll not have any more; they wouldn’t be safe.’

‘Not safe?’

‘There was a mutineer in the crew, my lad,’ said the Old Sailor, dropping his voice. ‘It comes awkward for me to tell you; but you ought to know—and duty before everything. The pretty birds were poisoned.’

‘Who could have been so cruel as to poison the innocent creatures?’ asked Dan sorrowfully.

‘That damned copper-coloured son of a thief

who cooked for me !' replied the Old Sailor excitedly. ' You saw him when you were on my ship. He had rings in his ears.'

' I remember. He was a Lascar, you told us.'

' The treacherous dog !' exclaimed the Old Sailor wrathfully, dabbing his face. ' But I did what was right to him. I flogged him with a rope's end till he couldn't stand.'

' He knew that Joshua gave you the birds, sir ?'

' Ay, he knew it. To tell you the truth, my lad, I christened the birds Josh and Dan, and used to call them by their names. They were as sensible as human beings, and I gave them decent burial. I sewed them in canvas, and weighted it with shot, and slipped it off a plank. I'll not have any more of them, Dan. That lubberly thief would crawl on board one night and murder them too. No, no, my lad ; no more birds for me.'

' Well, then, I'll tell you what we'll do,' said Dan. ' I will give you another pair of birds, and I will keep them for you, and you will come here sometimes and see how they are getting along. That's a good idea, isn't it, sir ?'

The Old Sailor admitted that it was, and thus

it fell out that he became a visitor to the house. Dan bought a toy ship, with sails and masts, and slender ropes all complete, and taught the birds to climb the ropes and masts, which they did deftly, although not in sailor fashion, hand-over-hand ; and his thoughtful conceit filled the Old Sailor with infinite delight.

It was Susan's good fortune not to meet the Lascar for many months after the eventful occurrence in which Joshua had played so prominent a part. But one evening, when she and Ellen were returning home, she met him face to face.

' Stop ! ' cried the Lascar, noticing Susan's agitation with secret pleasure. ' You don't forget me, do you ? '

Ellen, raising her eyes, saw and recognised the Lascar, and was recognised by him at the same moment.

' Ah ! ' he said, ' I remember you. You came one day with a lame boy and that young thief Joshua Marvel—curse him ! —to see Mr. Meddler's boat.'

Ellen tried to hurry Susan along, but the Lascar stood directly in their path.

' Not yet, my beauty. You are about the prettiest girl I've ever seen. What's your name ? '

Ellen was not so overcome with fear as to entirely lose her self-possession. Had she been alone, she would have run away. But Susan was clinging to her, almost fainting with terror. On the opposite side of the road she saw a man walking towards them.

‘Help!’ she cried; but she could have bitten her lips with vexation when she found that it was Solomon Fewster who responded to her appeal. However, there Solomon Fewster was, ready to grapple with the enemy and to die in Ellen’s defence. The occasion for a display of heroism was as good as he could have desired.

‘Where is he?’ he cried valiantly; ‘where’s the villain who has dared to frighten my pretty Ellen?’

He said this with such a presumptuous air of being her defender by natural right, that Ellen was annoyed and displeased. But she could not be uncivil to him. She thanked him for coming to their help, and he asked to be allowed to see them home. But Ellen refused, and although he pleaded hard, she was firm.

She was especially angry because of his calling her his pretty Ellen. Glad as she would have been of a protector, she rightly thought that it

would be giving Mr. Fewster encouragement if she allowed him to assume that office. So, with many distressingly tender protestations, he took his departure, congratulating himself upon the adventure, and Susan and Ellen walked homewards.

Ellen was very anxious to know all about the Lascar, and why Susan was frightened at him. Susan told her all, and Ellen's face glowed with delight at Joshua's courage.

'Brave Joshua!' she exclaimed. 'Isn't he a hero, Susan?'

Notwithstanding that she had not recovered from her fright at meeting the Lascar, Susan could not help smiling at Ellen's enthusiasm.

'He was to be away a year,' said Ellen, 'and it is now two years and four months.'

'And how many weeks, and how many days, and how many hours?' interrupted Susan, half gaily. 'You could tell, I daresay, Ellen, couldn't you, if you were put to it?' Ellen looked shyly at Susan. 'What a change he will find in you, my dear!' Susan continued tenderly. 'In the place of a plain little girl he will find a very pretty woman.'

'O Susey! calling me a woman!'

‘Well, you are, dear, or you will be when he comes back. I wonder——’

But Susan did not say what it was she wondered at, but stopped, most unaccountably, in the middle of the street and kissed Ellen in a motherly kind of way. The caress set Ellen a-blushing, and she fell into a state of happy musing. They were very near home when a voice at their side said,

‘You thought you had escaped me, eh?’

It was the voice of the Lascar, who had dogged them until he found an opportunity of speaking to them without attracting attention. Their hearts beat fast, but they did not turn their heads.

‘Don’t say a word,’ whispered Ellen, ‘don’t speak, don’t stop, don’t look! We shall be home directly.’

‘So Joshua Marvel hasn’t come back yet,’ he said with bitter emphasis. ‘He is a long time gone; but wait till he comes. I go every day to see the cross I put against him, and it grows brighter and brighter. I curse him every night. Perhaps he thinks that I forget. He shall see if I do.’ He gasped this at intervals, for the girls were now almost running in their terror. ‘Tell him,’ hissed the Lascar, ‘when he comes home

that I poisoned that old thief's birds because Joshua gave them to him, and because the old thief used to call one of them by his name. Curse him ! And you !' he exclaimed savagely, touching Susan's arm. ' See you—remember ! My shadow follows you from this day, you damned witch ! for it was because of you that he came across me. O, you live there, do you ? Dream of my shadow, you cat, to-night. It shall stand at your bedside. Blot it out if you can.'

He had worked himself into a horrible rage ; his passion made a madman of him ; yet he did not attempt to stop them as they darted in at the door, but stood aside and looked at the house, and marked it and lingered about it for half an hour afterwards. In the mean time Ellen and Susan had run into their bedroom and locked the door. It was a long time before they recovered from their agitation. Susan was in an agony of terror ; all her old fears came with stronger force upon her. She pressed her fingers upon her eyes and threw herself upon the ground, shuddering and moaning.

' Do you see his shadow, Ellen ?' she moaned.
' Do you see it ?'

' There is nothing in the room but you and

me, dear Susey,' said Ellen, smoothing Susan's hair, and striving by every means to soothe her. 'Why, I am braver than you, and I am ever so much younger. What have we to be afraid of? A drunken man! You stupid Susey! And as for shadows, who believes in them?'

'I do. I have seen them and felt them. I have heard them creeping after me in the dark, and I have been frightened to turn. I have felt their breath upon my face—and it is like death—like death!'

All Ellen's efforts to tranquillise her were unavailing. Susan did not leave her room again that evening, and during the night that followed she awoke a dozen times, and her fevered imagination conjured up the shadow of the Lascar standing at her bedside, pointing to a cross of blood which shone with cruel distinctness in the midst of the darkness.

CHAPTER XV.

SOLOMON FEWSTER GIVES THE LASCAR A FLOWER.

EARLY in the new year letters from Joshua reached home. With what joy they were read ! In one of them he wrote : ‘ I remember saying that I should be home in twelve months ; but that time has passed, and another twelve months, and nearly another, and still there is no talk of returning. If I stay away much longer you won’t know me when you see me. Upon my word, I think if I were to open the door now and walk in suddenly, you would be puzzled to know whether I was really myself or somebody else.’

When they read this they all raised their heads and looked towards the door, wishing that Joshua would turn the handle and walk into the room.

The evening of the day on which the letters arrived was spent in grand state in Dan’s house. Every member of the Marvel family was there, and the Old Sailor, and Solomon Fewster as well ; so that the little parlour was quite full, and all

the chairs had to be brought from the bedroom and the kitchen to provide seats for the company. The letters were read aloud, and commented upon and rejoiced over.

‘It isn’t as good as Joshua’s being here,’ said Dan, looking round with a happy face; ‘but it is next door to it. I tell you what pleases me almost as much as anything in the letters—it is that Jo’s a favourite with the men. Hear what he says: “I play to them on my accordion two or three times a week, and according to them I am a splendid musician—which I am not, you know, for I only play simple tunes. Last week the captain sent for me and told me that some passengers who were on board wanted to dance, and wished me to play for them. Of course I fetched the accordion at once. You should have seen us! I played for them twice after that night; and yesterday when we arrived at Sydney—O Dan! such a lovely place, with such a bay!—they gave me a sovereign, which I put into Ellen’s purse. Tell Ellen that!”’

A blush came into Ellen’s face, and her heart beat more quickly, when she heard that Joshua was so careful of the purse she had worked for him.

Filled with such-like matter, the letters could not fail to be a source of delight. Dan was commissioned to give Joshua's love to Ellen, and Ellen was asked to pay a visit to the Old Sailor, and to tell him that Joshua was doing his duty. Susan received messages for Basil and Minnie, and was to tell Minnie that Joshua would bring her some beautiful shells—‘shells in which Minnie can hear the waves singing to each other in whispers,’ Joshua wrote, almost poetically.

Minnie, sitting in her corner, scarcely spoke a word; she was thinking of the sailor-lad who had been so kind to her, and she was looking with the eyes of her mind upon the picture which Dan had painted of Joshua, with his handsome face and free waving hair, standing on the deck, and laughingly shaking the spray from his eyes.

The Old Sailor nodded approval as the letters were read, and then traced Joshua's course on a map which he had brought with him, stopping many times to tell the eager on-lookers of the wonders and the glories of the beautiful South Pacific. The map was spread on the table, and it was not an unattractive picture to see them all clustered round the Old Sailor, peeping over his shoulders and under his arms, as with his great

forefinger he followed the ship from port to port. Mrs. Marvel, who had taken to spectacles, found them of but little use to her on this occasion, for the obstinate tears came into her eyes and dropped into the ocean which the Old Sailor's forefinger was ploughing. Minnie leant over Dan's shoulder, and the table was so small that she had to put her arm round Dan's neck and to put her face close to his, so that she might see. A strange feeling of happiness came upon Dan as her cheek nestled close to his ; a feeling of happiness so exquisite that all his senses were merged in it. The common parlour, the eager faces peering at the map, the pleasant voice of the Old Sailor explaining the route, all faded from before him, and he was conscious of nothing but Minnie's presence. He felt the warm contact of a soft hand ; it was Minnie's hand, which in her eager abstraction she had placed on his. He folded it in his, and she allowed it to rest there. It was like a dream. He feared to move, and held his breath lest he should awake. A sudden murmur of voices—voices that sounded for a moment as if they came from afar off—aroused him ; he looked into Minnie's face, and saw it lighted up with a happiness that seemed to be a reflex of his own ; and as she turned her

eyes to his, so luminous a beauty dwelt in them that he could have fallen at her feet and worshipped her. But the dream was at an end—the blissful silence which had encompassed him was invaded. Minnie had returned to her corner, and his friends were speaking together, and laughing, and appealing to him upon some point which he had not heard. Dan still felt the warm pressure of Minnie's hand and the soft contact of her cheek; and unobserved he rested his lips upon the palm which had clasped hers, and kissed it softly and wonderfully.

There was only one person in the party who did not feel happy. That one was Solomon Fewster. Directly he entered the room he had been greeted with the joyful tidings; and understanding that he was expected to share in the general excitement of pleasure, he professed a delight which he did not experience. That afternoon he had purchased a rare flower, which it was his intention to present to Ellen. He had brooded over the idea for several days, and had decided that it would be a good thing to do. As he entered the room with the flower in the button-hole of his coat, he was already primed with a few complimentary words which he had learnt by heart to

say to Ellen when he presented his gift. Ellen had never before looked so pretty, he thought. Her eyes were brighter, and there was a more joyous animation than usual in her manner. She greeted him with a smile so much more gracious than he was accustomed to receive from her, that he congratulated himself upon the purchase of the flower. She gave him her hand with more than her usual warmth, and when he ventured gently to press it, she did not resent the liberty. The fact was, she did not notice it. She was full of joy, and, as is the case with all amiable natures, she dispensed gleams of her happiness to all with whom she came in contact. Unless we are too much engrossed in our own special cares, we sometimes meet with such-like happy faces in the streets—faces which seem to say, ‘We are happy; be happy with us’—faces which, although quite strange to us, which we have never seen before and may never see again, will kindle with a smile of welcome upon the smallest encouragement.

But Solomon Fewster was terribly discomfited when he learnt the reason of her cheerfulness and animation; it was because letters had been received from Joshua. He determined not to present his flower just then, for he read something

in Ellen's blushes that sorely galled him. He could not help thinking that the fuss they were making about a common sailor-boy, and the laughing and the crying they indulged in over Joshua's stupid letters, were utterly ridiculous, and in a sort of way derogatory to himself, Dan's best patron. As the night wore on, his anger and uneasiness increased ; and yet he lingered until the last moment, torturing himself with all kinds of speculations as to what was the nature of the feeling that Ellen entertained for Joshua. Every expression of gladness that fell from her lips concerning Joshua and Joshua's career was painful to him, and it was with a bitter heart that he left the house, with the flower still in his coat. He was hot and feverish as he closed the street-door behind him, and he was not sorry to find that a heavy rain was falling. He took off his hat and bared his head to the rain. Within the house he had been compelled to repress expression of his feelings ; it was a relief to him now to feel that no one was by, and that he could speak out at last. And the first words he uttered, as he smoothed his wet hair and put on his hat, were, ' Damn Joshua Marvel ! I would give money to drown him !' As he spoke the words aloud, he was con-

scious of a slouching figure at his side. Although it was raining, the night was not quite dark; there was enough light for him to notice that the man who had approached him was in rags—most probably a beggar. Muttering that he had nothing to give, Solomon Fewster walked on. But the man was not to be so easily shaken off, and Mr. Fewster being in an eminently quarrelsome mood turned upon him, and repeated in no civil tone that he had nothing to give.

‘I have not asked you for anything,’ said the man surlily, ‘though if I had, you might speak to me more civilly, Mr. Fewster.’

They were passing a lamp-post, and attracted by the utterance of his name, Mr. Fewster stopped and said,

‘How do you know my name?’

‘I know it; that is enough,’ was the answer.

‘Ah,’ said Mr. Fewster, regarding the Lascar with curiosity and recognising him, ‘I have seen you before, my man.’

‘That is not saying much against me, master,’ said the Lascar rather sneeringly. ‘I have seen you before; so we’re equal.’

‘And whenever I have seen you, it has been in this street,’ continued Mr. Fewster.

‘And pretty well whenever I have seen *you*, it has been in this street,’ retorted the Lascar; ‘*you* seem to be as fond of it as I am.’

‘And generally of a night.’

‘The same to you, master; and what then? The street is free to me as it is to you. Look you. I know more than you are aware of. If it comes to that, why do *you* go so often to that house?’ The sudden look of discomposure that flashed into Mr. Fewster’s face was not lost upon the Lascar, who had seen him walking by Ellen’s side more than once, and who had stealthily followed them on every occasion. ‘Look you, master. What one man does for love, another man does for hate.’

‘Hate of whom? What do you mean?’

‘The people in that house have received letters from Joshua Marvel to-day.’

‘Well, what of that?’

‘What of that!’ cried the Lascar, in a voice of suppressed passion, and yet with a cunning watchfulness of Mr. Fewster’s face, as if he were watching for a cue to speak more plainly. ‘Well, nothing much, master; except that I should like to know when the cub is coming home.’

Mr. Fewster could not help an expression of satisfaction passing into his eyes as he heard

Joshua spoken of as a cub, and the Lascar saw it and took his cue from it.

‘What do you want to know for? What is Joshua Marvel to you?’

‘He is this to me,’ cried the Lascar, the dark blood rushing into his face and making it darker; ‘that if I had him here, I would stamp upon him with my feet and spoil his beauty for him! He is this to me, that if I could twist his heart-strings I would do it, and laugh in his face the while! See me now, master; look at me well. I did not ask you for money, for I know you, and I know you don’t give nothing for nothing. But I might have asked you, and with reason, for I want it. Look at my feet’ (Mr. Fewster noticed, for the first time, that the Lascar’s feet were bare); ‘look at my clothes—rags. That old thief, Praiseworthy Meddler, kicked me off his barge where I’ve lived and slept this many a year. And every blow he struck at me went down to Joshua Marvel’s account, and makes it heavier against him. See you; the Lascar dog never forgets. I’ve sworn an oath, and I’ll keep it. I’ve put a cross against him, and he shall see it when he is dying.’

Solomon Fewster looked at the wretch before him, quivering with passion and shivering with

cold, and deliberately cracked his fingers one after another. When the operation was concluded, he said lightly, as taking no interest in what the Lascar had said,

‘That is your business, my friend; not mine. I will tell you as far as I know about this young gentleman who has served you so well. He is not coming home yet awhile, I believe—not before the end of the year, perhaps. I daresay you’ll manage to see him when he does come home.’

‘Yes, I’ll manage to see him then,’ said the Lascar, with a sudden quietude of manner and with a furtive look at Mr. Fewster’s face—a look which said, ‘You are trying to deceive me, master; let us see who is the more cunning—you or I.’ Then aloud, ‘Thank you for answering my question. You say it is not your business, this hate of mine for Joshua Marvel. Yet there may be something in common between us, for I’ve seen you walking with the girl who worships Joshua Marvel.’

‘How do you know that she worships him?’ demanded Mr. Fewster, thrown off his guard, his heart beating loud and fast.

‘Because I am not blind. I know that as well as I know that you have as much cause to

hate him as I have. I am like a cat ; I watch and watch. You are too young, my master, to mask your face ; and I have seen that in it that you wouldn't like to speak.'

'Mind what you are saying,' said Mr. Fewster, with his knuckles at his teeth ; 'you are on dangerous ground.'

'Why should I mind ?' questioned the Lascar, with a curious mixture of fierceness and humility in his voice. 'My tongue's my own. I have nothing to lose : judge you if you have anything to gain. Mind you, I stop at nothing. I am not squeamish. You are a gentleman ; I am a vagabond. I can do what you daren't. I can help you to what you want, perhaps ; and you can help me.'

The cunning of the Lascar was too deep for Mr. Fewster. The Lascar saw as clearly as if he had been told that Solomon Fewster loved Ellen Taylor, and he seized instinctively upon Ellen's love for Joshua as the lever by which he was to gain power over Mr. Fewster. In the present conversation the men were not evenly matched ; the Lascar had all the advantage on his side. Subtle as Mr. Fewster was, his love blinded his judgment, and his hate led him to consider that this man might be useful to him.

'I can help you, you tell me,' he said. 'How?'

'I am cold to the bone,' said the shivering wretch. 'Treat me to some rum.'

They walked until they reached a public-house; then Mr. Fewster gave the Lascar money.

'Go in and drink; but don't get drunk.'

'Ain't you coming in, master?'

'No,' said Mr. Fewster, with a look of contempt at the Lascar's tatters. 'You can buy a bottle of rum, and bring it out with you. And mind, when you come out, don't walk by my side; follow me.'

Five minutes afterwards they were walking in single file towards Mr. Fewster's place of business, where he lived. When they arrived at the door, Mr. Fewster hesitated. He wanted to talk to the Lascar, to get out of him all he knew about Ellen and Joshua; yet, looking at the Lascar, he hesitated. The man divined what was in his mind, and said,

'There is a policeman coming along on the other side of the way. Go to him and say, "Look at this man; I have occasion to speak to him on a matter of business; but he is a disreputable dog, and I want you to watch the house. Knock in an hour, and if I don't answer, or if you hear any

noise, force open the door.' Say that to him, or something like it, and give him a pint of beer, and you will be all right.'

'Come along,' said Mr. Fewster, stung by the Lascar's quiet sneer; 'I am not frightened of you.'

'You have no need to be, master. You can use me like a dog, if you give me to eat and drink.'

'Like a dog!' echoed Mr. Fewster, with a laugh. 'Well, suppose I regard you in that light; it may be useful.'

Mr. Fewster struck a light in the shop, in which there were at least a score of coffins—respectable coffins, solemnly black as coffins should be, with respectable nails to match.

'Waiting for tenants,' he remarked pleasantly to the Lascar. 'The cheap ones—common deal—are in the workshop at the back.' Mr. Fewster put the candle down upon a coffin, and looked complacently upon his wares. 'Handsome, are they not? This one, now, with lacquered handles and silvered plate for name, age, and virtues, what should you say to that?'

'Shouldn't care much for it,' said the Lascar, with evident repugnance. 'It would be more suit-

able for such as you, master. A cheap one—a common deal—will be good enough for me, when my turn comes.'

'Quite good enough, I should say.'

'You are not going to stop here talking, are you?' inquired the Lascar, seeing that Mr. Fewster evinced no disposition to move.

'Why, don't you like it, you dog?' retorted Mr. Fewster, with a spice of his native humour.

'No, I don't; it smells of worms.'

With a pleasant laugh Mr. Fewster led the way into his sitting-room, and set light to the fire and lit a second candle.

'This is better,' said the Lascar, huddling before the fire. 'Ah, this is good, this warmth; it is life! Have you ever slept out in the cold, master?'

'No, you dog,' answered Mr. Fewster.

He had recovered his self-possession and much of his usual equanimity.

'I have; in the cold and wet, for two or three nights together.'

'There was the Union,' suggested Mr. Fewster.

'I have been there often enough. Sometimes I was too late; sometimes there were too many

of us; sometimes I didn't care even for that shelter.'

'Would you like to sleep in my shop? I think I could trust you there.'

'I think you might. I shouldn't be likely to steal a coffin. I shouldn't care to sleep there, master, and that's flat. If I woke up in the dark, I should see dead men lying in the coffins. I wouldn't mind it so much if the coffins were plain deal ones; but black—ugh!'

Mr. Fewster laughed loud and long. Coffins were playthings to him—toys symbolical of the joys of life. He laughed merrily as he set food on the table, the Lascar watching him with greedy eyes the while. 'Fall to, you dog!' said Mr. Fewster; and like a dog, devoid though of a dog's generous nature, the Lascar fell to, and devoured the bread and cheese. Meanwhile Mr. Fewster helped himself to a large glass of rum. He was one of the soberest of undertakers, who, as a rule, are not the soberest of men. He drank but very rarely; but when he did, all the worst part of his nature disported itself, in revenge for being generally kept so much under control. Now as he drank his rum—and he drank it neat—he became savage, vengeful, desperate. He had never felt till now

how deeply he loved Ellen Taylor. He had loved her in a light way from the first, and his love had grown quietly, and had been fed by her avoidance of his attentions. Her behaviour towards him had deepened his love and intensified it. Yet all along, notwithstanding that he felt he was not as agreeable in her eyes as he would wish to be, he thought that to have he had only to ask. ‘They, poor working people,’ he thought, ‘earning just enough to keep them, living as it were from hand to mouth, *must* feel flattered and honoured by my attention—by the attention of a man who has a prosperous business and an account at the bank.’ As for marriage, he had not thought of that till lately. But Ellen had so firmly and so steadily repulsed him in any advances he had plucked up courage to make, that he had resolved to lower himself and ask her to be his wife. Having determined to make the sacrifice, he considered that the road was clear to him. He reasoned with himself thus: ‘She thought perhaps that I did not mean honourably by her, and that is the cause of her treating me so coldly; but when she learns my real intentions she cannot but feel flattered, and must accept me.’

He thought over these things as he sat before

the fire, entirely engrossed by love for Ellen and hate for Joshua. The Lascar had helped himself to the spirits, and as Mr. Fewster sat studying the fire, he sat studying his host. That it was a study that interested him and pleased him was evident from the satisfied expression in his face, and from the satisfied manner in which he rubbed his hands gently over one another.

‘Well, you dog !’ exclaimed Mr. Fewster insolently.

‘Well, master ?’ replied the Lascar meekly.

‘Have you had enough, you dog ?’

‘Plenty, thank you, master.’

The Master took another drink of rum, and the Dog followed suit. The Master regarded the Dog with a contemptuous assumption of superiority. The Dog regarded the Master with becoming humbleness. But the Dog had the best of it, although he did cast down his eyes.

‘Look up, you dog,’ said Mr. Fewster.

The Dog looked up.

‘What would you do to Joshua Marvel if you had him here, with no one by ?’

The Lascar, who had been playing idly with the knife with which he had cut his supper, raised it, and with a fierce action struck at the air.

Then, springing to his feet, he threw aside his chair, and kneeling on the ground, made motions with his fingers as if he were strangling an enemy.

‘H-m !’ exclaimed Mr. Fewster, looking at the upturned face, blazing with vindictiveness, that fronted his. ‘Dangerous !’

‘That’s my business. I’ll risk the danger of it. See you—shall I speak plainly ?’

‘Yes.’

‘This girl that you love worships the man that you and I hate—’

‘Say that *you* hate, you dog,’ interrupted Mr. Fewster. ‘I’ll have no partnership. I am master.’

‘I ask your pardon, master. The girl that you love worships the man that I hate. She is waiting for him to come home ; so am I. I have sworn death to him. When he comes home, the girl that you love will have no eyes for any one but him. What chance will you have with her then ?’

‘Stop. You are too fast. Speak of yourself and of them without reference to me. Don’t iterate with your damnable tongue about the girl that *I* love. The girl that *I* love, I’ll have——’

‘So you shall, master, if I can help you.’

‘ When I want your help, I’ll ask for it. Now go on with your story, and heed my caution.’

With ready wit the Lascar fell into Mr. Fewster’s humour.

‘ This girl that I speak of—as pretty a picture of flesh and blood as eyes ever saw—is loved by a gentleman who in a sort of way has lowered himself to think of her. But the gentleman has made up his mind to have her, and when a gentleman makes up his mind, who shall stop him? He goes one night to the house where this pretty girl lives—I shouldn’t wonder if the very flower that the gentleman wore in his button-hole wasn’t intended for her—’

‘ You are a clever dog, you !’ said Mr. Fewster, half in anger, half in admiration.

‘ Thank you, master. With the flower in his button - hole the gentleman goes to the house where his pretty girl lives, and there he spends the evening, and hears read, I daresay, some letters which she has received from his rival, who is a sailor—I only speak from fancy, master ; set me right if you can.’

‘ How can I set you right when I know nothing about it, you dog, except by saying that I shouldn’t think it likely *she* received any letters?’

‘ Thank you, master. My fancy was wrong, I’ve no doubt. The gentleman, then, is obliged to listen to some letters which have been received from abroad, and is obliged to listen to affectionate words uttered by the girl he loves for his rival far away—mind, master, I don’t know this, I only suspect it—and he sees, too, in her face, that when her sailor-boy comes home, she will open her arms to his rival, to his enemy, whom he hates, and would like to see put out of the way.’

‘ How do you know that last?’

‘ I have seen it in his face ; I have heard it in his voice. I happened to see the gentleman come out of his sweetheart’s house one rainy night, not long ago ; and I happened to hear the gentleman mutter that he would give money if that sailor-lover was drowned.’

‘ If I were the gentleman, and you told me this to my face, I should say that you lied.’

‘ Of course you would ; but what should you know of it ? Still, master, confess that the story is a likely one as far as it has gone.’

‘ There is more of it to come, then?’ asked Mr. Fewster, who had turned his back so that the Lascar should not see his face.

‘ There *is* more of it to come. But say, first,

it is a likely story as far as I have told it,' said the Lascar a little doggedly.

'It is likely enough. I have heard stories more strange.'

'Where did I leave off? O, about my hearing this gentleman say, as he stood bareheaded in the rain, that he wished his rival were dead. Now that was a fortunate hearing for me. Not that I should take advantage of what I heard; not that I should go to the pretty girl's brother, and then tell him what I had heard the gentleman say about his sailor-friend; not that I should go to the pretty girl herself and say, "Beware of the gentleman; he means mischief; if he can ruin your lover he will." That would be a mean thing to do; for it would upset the gentleman's chances with the girl that he loves. No; I should go to the gentleman, and say, "I hate this absent lover, and anything that I could do to make him suffer, I would do cheerfully. You would do the same. But you are a gentleman, and I am a dog. You mustn't be seen in the matter. What you want done do through me. Never mind how mean it is, how dirty it is; do it through me. And all the return I want for it is enough to buy food and shelter, and perhaps a drop of grog and a bit of

tobacco.' That wouldn't be much to ask in return for what I may be able to do for him.'

'But no gentleman would compromise himself by entering into a bargain with a—a—'

'A dog, master—say a dog; it is good enough for me,' interposed the Lascar with a careless laugh.

'With a dog like you. I don't see how the affair could be arranged with a proper understanding as to what was expected to be done.'

'It could be arranged easily enough, master. I might ask the gentleman, supposing he had a flower in his button-hole, to give me that flower, and not say another word. That would be a proper understanding for both of us.'

Mr. Fewster rose, and put aside the curtain of the window. The rain was coming down hard and fast, and the wind was tearing furiously through the streets.

'A fine storm for a ship to be in near rocks, master,' said the Lascar, who had risen, and was standing by his side.

'It is time for you to be going,' said Mr. Fewster, turning abruptly away from the window.

'In such a night as this!' exclaimed the Lascar. 'And I with no place to put my head in!'

‘ You are homeless, then?’ The Lascar nodded.
‘ Well, I take you into my service. It would be hard if no one could be found to do a good turn for a poor devil like you.’

‘ That it would, master,’ said the Lascar, standing in an attitude of expectation; ‘ and thank you. Could you spare that flower out of your coat?’

Blinded by passion, inflamed by jealousy, Mr. Fewster detached the flower, and threw it to the Lascar, whose eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he put it in his pocket.

‘ You can sleep in the out-house,’ said Mr. Fewster; ‘ and as every dog should have a kennel, I daresay you can find a coffin to lie in.’

‘ No, thank you, master; I will lie on the ground.’ He poured what remained of the rum into his glass, and raised it to his lips. ‘ Here’s luck, and my faithful service to you! You may depend upon me, for my heart is in my work.’

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